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VOL. VI.

PSALM CXIX. TO CXXIV.

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"*Messrs. Funk & Wagnall have entered into an arrangement with me to reprint* THE TREASURY OF DAVID *in the United States. I have every confidence in them that they will issue it correctly and worthily. It has been the great literary work of my life, and I trust it will be as kindly received in America as in England. I wish for Messrs. Funk success in a venture which must involve a great risk, and much outlay.*"

Dec. 8, 1881. C. H. SPURGEON.

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# PREFACE.

AT length I am able to present to the Christian public another part of "The Treasury of David." It has demanded longer labour than its predecessors, but that labour has been freely given to it; and to the utmost of my ability I have kept the volume up to the level of those which have gone before. In the production of this exposition I had far rather be long than lax; for I know by experience the disappointment which comes to readers when, after a promising beginning, they see a serious declension towards the end. The general acceptance given to this Commentary has placed me under a heavy obligation to do my best even to the end. Towards that end I am still proceeding with all possible diligence, and it is with great pleasure that I look forward to the speedy issue of the seventh and last volume of the work. Many labours distract me from this favourite employment, but I hope to press on with more speed than of late, if my life be spared. It would be imprudent to make too sure of *that;* for the most fragile Venice glass is not more brittle than human life:

> "The spider's most attenuated thread
> Is cord, is cable, to the tender film
> Which holds our soul in life."

I have been all the longer over this portion of my task because I have been bewildered in the expanse of the One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm, which makes up the bulk of this volume. Its dimensions and its depth alike overcame me. It spread itself out before me like a vast, rolling prairie, to which I could see no bound, and this alone created a feeling of dismay. Its expanse was unbroken by a bluff or headland, and hence it threatened a monotonous task, although the fear has not been realized. This marvellous poem seemed to me a great sea of

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holy teaching, moving, in its many verses, wave upon wave; altogether without an island of special and remarkable statement to break it up. I confess I hesitated to launch upon it. Other psalms have been mere lakes, but this is the main ocean. It is a continent of sacred thought, every inch of which is fertile as the garden of the Lord: it is an amazing level of abundance, a mighty stretch of harvest-fields. I have now crossed the great plain for myself, but not without persevering, and, I will add, pleasurable, toil. Several great authors have traversed this region and left their tracks behind them, and so far the journey has been all the easier for me; but yet to me and to my helpers it has been no mean feat of patient authorship and research. This great Psalm is a book in itself: instead of being one among many psalms, it is worthy to be set forth by itself as a poem of surpassing excellence. Those who have never studied it may pronounce it commonplace, and complain of its repetitions; but to the thoughtful student it is like the great deep, full, so as never to be measured; and varied, so as never to weary the eye. Its depth is as great as its length; it is mystery, not set forth as mystery, but concealed beneath the simplest statements; may I say that it is experience allowed to prattle, to preach, to praise, and to pray like a child-prophet in his own father's house?

My venerable friend, Mr. Rogers, has been spared to help me with his admirable suggestions; but Mr. Gibson, who so industriously translated from the Latin authors, has fallen asleep, leaving behind him copious notes upon the rest of the psalms. Aid in the homiletical department has been given me by several of the ministers who were educated at the Pastors' College, and their names are duly appended to the hints and skeletons which they have supplied. In this department the present volume is believed to be superior to the former ones. May it prove to be really useful to my brethren, and my desire is fulfilled. I know so well the use of a homiletic hint when the mind is in search for a subject that I have felt peculiar pleasure in supplying my readers with a full measure of such helps.

In hunting up rare authors, and making extracts from them, Mr. Keys has rendered me great assistance, and I am also a debtor to others who have cheerfully rendered me service when I have sought it. Burdened with the care of many institutions, and the oversight of a singularly large church, I cannot do such

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justice to my theme as I could wish. Learned leisure would be far more accurate than my busy pen can ever hope to be. If I had nothing else to think of, I would have thought of nothing else, and undivided energies could have accomplished what spare strength can never perform. Hence, I am glad of help; so glad, that I am happy to acknowledge it. Not in this thing only, but in all other labours, I owe in the first place all to God, and secondarily, very, very much to those generous friends who find a delight in making my efforts successful.

Above all, I trust that the Holy Spirit has been with me in writing and compiling these volumes, and therefore I expect that he will bless them both to the conversion of the unrenewed and to the edification of believers. The writing of this book has been a means of grace to my own heart; I have enjoyed for myself what I have prepared for my readers. The Book of Psalms has been a royal banquet to me, and in feasting upon its contents I have seemed to eat angels' food. It is no wonder that old writers should call it,—the school of patience, the soul's soliloquies, the little Bible, the anatomy of conscience, the rose garden, the pearl island, and the like. It is the Paradise of devotion, the Holy Land of poesy, the heart of Scripture, the map of experience, and the tongue of saints. It is the spokesman of feelings which else had found no utterance. Does it not say just what we wished to say? Are not its prayers and praises exactly such as our hearts delight in? No man needs better company than the Psalms; therein he may read and commune with friends human and divine; friends who know the heart of man towards God, and the heart of God towards man; friends who perfectly sympathize with us and our sorrows, friends who never betray or forsake. Oh, to be shut up in a cave with David, with no other occupation but to hear him sing, and to sing with him! Well might a Christian monarch lay aside his crown for such enjoyment, and a believing pauper find a crown in such felicity.

It is to be feared that the Psalms are by no means so prized as in earlier ages of the Church. Time was when the Psalms were not only rehearsed in all the churches from day to day, but they were so universally sung that the common people knew them, even if they did not know the letters in which they were written. Time was when bishops would ordain no man to the

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ministry unless he knew "David" from end to end, and could repeat each psalm correctly; even Councils of the Church have decreed that none should hold ecclesiastical office unless they knew the whole psalter by heart. Other practices of those ages had better be forgotten, but to *this* memory accords an honourable record. Then, as Jerome tells us, the labourer, while he held the plough, sang Hallelujah; the tired reaper refreshed himself with the psalms, and the vinedresser, while trimming the vines with his curved hook, sang something of David. He tells us that in his part of the world, psalms were the Christian's ballads; could they have had better? They were the love-songs of the people of God; could any others be so pure and heavenly? These sacred hymns express all modes of holy feeling; they are fit both for childhood and old age: they furnish maxims for the entrance of life, and serve as watchwords at the gates of death. The battle of life, the repose of the Sabbath, the ward of the hospital, the guest-chamber of the mansion, the church, the oratory, yea, even heaven itself may be entered with psalms.

My next portion will continue the Pilgrim Psalms, of which we have five in the present volume. I have been sorry to make a break in these golden steps. I would rather have presented the glittering ascent as a whole, that all might see at a glance "the stairs of the City of David at the ascent of the wall;" but as the books must divide somewhere, and there was no more convenient place, I have been compelled to separate these Songs of the Steps, or "Songs on the high key," as Luther calls them. It was impossible to cut the great psalm in two, and it is a far less evil to separate the members of a group. I hope the arrangement will not cause serious inconvenience to anyone; nor prevent the student's meditating upon each Song of Degrees, not only as it sparkles as a separate star, but as it shines in its own constellation.

Finally, when I reach the last psalm, it is my firm conviction that I shall find no truer closing words for myself than those of Bishop Horne, which I take liberty here to quote, using them as if they were my own, since they admirably express my present feelings and past experiences:—

"And now, could the author flatter himself that anyone would

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take half the pleasure in reading the following exposition which he hath taken in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour. The employment detached him from the bustle and hurry of life, the din of politics, and the noise of folly. Vanity and vexation flew for a season, care and disquietude came not near his dwelling. He arose fresh as the morning to his task; the silence of the night invited him to pursue it; and he can truly say, that food and rest were not preferred before it. Every psalm improved infinitely upon his acquaintance with it, and no one gave him uneasiness but the last; for then he grieved that his work was done. Happier hours than those which have been spent on these meditations on the songs of Zion he never expects to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and they moved smoothly and swiftly along; for when thus engaged, he counted no time. The meditations are gone, but have left a relish and a fragrance upon the mind, and the remembrance of them is sweet."

Reader,
I am,
Thine to serve,
For Christ's sake,

C. H. Spurgeon

WESTWOOD,
*September*, 1882.

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# PSALM CXIX.

TITLE.—*There is no title to this Psalm, neither is any author's name mentioned. It is* THE LONGEST PSALM, *and this is a sufficiently distinctive name for it. It equals in bulk twenty-two psalms of the average length of the Songs of Degrees. Nor is it long only; for it equally excels in breadth of thought, depth of meaning, and height of fervour. It is like the celestial city which lieth four-square, and the height and the breadth of it are equal. Many superficial readers have imagined that it harps upon one string, and abounds in pious repetitions and redundancies; but this arises from the shallowness of the reader's own mind: those who have studied this divine hymn, and carefully noted each line of it, are amazed at the variety and profundity of the thought. Using only a few words, the writer has produced permutations and combinations of meaning which display his holy familiarity with his subject, and the sanctified ingenuity of his mind. He never repeats himself; for if the same sentiment recurs it is placed in a fresh connection, and so exhibits another interesting shade of meaning. The more one studies it the fresher it becomes. As those who drink the Nile water like it better every time they take a draught, so does this Psalm become the more full and fascinating the oftener you turn to it. It contains no idle word; the grapes of this cluster are almost to bursting full with the new wine of the kingdom. The more you look into this mirror of a gracious heart the more you will see in it. Placid on the surface as the sea of glass before the eternal throne, it yet contains within its depths an ocean of fire, and those who devoutly gaze into it shall not only see the brightness, but feel the glow of the sacred flame. It is loaded with holy sense, and is as weighty as it is bulky. Again and again have we cried while studying it, "Oh the depths!" Yet these depths are hidden beneath an apparent simplicity, as Augustine has well and wisely said, and this makes the exposition all the more difficult. Its obscurity is hidden beneath a veil of light, and hence only those discover it who are in thorough earnest, not only to look on the word, but, like the angels, to look* into *it.*

*The Psalm is alphabetical. Eight stanzas commence with one letter, and then another eight with the next letter, and so the whole Psalm proceeds by octonaries quite through the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Besides which, there are multitudes of appositions of sense, and others of those structural formalities with which the oriental mind is pleased,—formalities very similar to those in which our older poets indulged. The Holy Spirit thus deigned to speak to men in forms which were attractive to the attention and helpful to the memory. He is often plain or elegant in his manner, but he does not disdain to be quaint or formal if thereby his design of instruction can be the more surely reached. He does not despise even contracted and artificial modes of speech, if by their use he can fix his teaching upon the mind. Isaac Taylor has worthily set forth the lesson of this fact:—"In the strictest sense this composition is* conditioned; *nevertheless in the highest sense is it an utterance of spiritual life; and in thus finding these seemingly opposed elements, intimately commingled as they are throughout this Psalm, a lesson full of meaning is silently conveyed to those who shall receive it—that the conveyance of the things of God to the human spirit is in no way damaged or impeded, much less is it deflected or vitiated by its subjugation to those modes of utterance which most of all bespeak their adaptation to the infancy and the childlike capacity of the recipient."*

AUTHOR.—*The fashion among modern writers is, as far as possible, to take every Psalm from David. As the critics of this school are usually unsound in doctrine and unspiritual*


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*in tone, we gravitate in the opposite direction, from a natural suspicion of everything which comes from so unsatisfactory a quarter. We believe that David wrote this Psalm. It is Davidic in tone and expression, and it tallies with David's experience in many interesting points. In our youth our teacher called it "David's pocket book," and we incline to the opinion then expressed that here we have the royal diary written at various times throughout a long life. No, we cannot give up this psalm to the enemy. "This is David's spoil." After long reading an author one gets to know his style, and a measure of discernment is acquired by which his composition is detected even if his name be concealed; we feel a kind of critical certainty that the hand of David is in this thing, yea, that it is altogether his own.*

SUBJECT.—*The one theme is the word of the Lord. The Psalmist sets his subject in many lights, and treats of it in divers ways, but he seldom omits to mention the word of the Lord in each verse under some one or other of the many names by which he knows it; and even if the name be not there, the subject is still heartily pursued in every stanza. He who wrote this wonderful song was saturated with those books of Scripture which he possessed. Andrew Bonar tells of a simple Christian in a farmhouse who had* meditated *the Bible through three times. This is precisely what this Psalmist had done,—he had gone past reading into meditation: Like Luther, David had shaken every fruit-tree in God's garden, and gathered golden fruit therefrom. "The most," says Martin Boos, "read their Bibles like cows that stand in the thick grass, and trample under their feet the finest flowers and herbs." It is to be feared that we too often do the like. This is a miserable way of treating the pages of inspiration. May the Lord prevent us from repeating that sin while reading this priceless Psalm.*

*There is an evident growth in the subject matter. The earlier verses are of such a character as to lend themselves to the hypothesis that the author was a young man, while many of the later passages could only have suggested themselves to age and wisdom. In every portion, however, it is the fruit of deep experience, careful observation, and earnest meditation. If David did not write it, there must have lived another believer of exactly the same order of mind as David, and he must have addicted himself to psalmody with equal ardour, and have been an equally hearty lover of Holy Writ.*

*Our best improvement of this sacred composition will come through getting our minds into intense sympathy with its subject. In order to this, we might do well to commit it to memory. Philip Henry's daughter wrote in her diary, "I have of late taken some pains to learn by heart Psalm CXIX., and have made some progress therein." She was a sensible, godly woman. Having done this, we should consider the fulness, certainty, clearness, and sweetness of the word of God, since by such reflections we are likely to be stirred up to a warm affection for it. What favoured beings are those to whom the Eternal God has written a letter in his own hand and style. What ardour of devotion, what diligence of composition can produce a worthy eulogium for the divine testimonies! If ever one such has fallen from the pen of man it is this CXIX. Psalm, which might well be called the holy soul's soliloquy before an open Bible.*

*This sacred ode is a little Bible, the Scriptures condensed, a mass of Bibline, Holy Writ rewritten in holy emotions and actions. Blessed are they who can read and understand these saintly aphorisms; they shall find golden apples in this true Hesperides, and come to reckon that this Psalm, like the whole Scripture which it praises, is a pearl island, or, better still, a garden of sweet flowers.*

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## NOTES RELATING TO THE PSALM AS A WHOLE.

*Eulogium upon the whole Psalm.*—This psalm shines and shows itself among the rest,

*Velut inter ignes*
*Luna minores.**

a star in the firmament of the psalms, of the first and greatest magnitude. This will readily appear if you consider either the manner it is composed in, or the matter it is composed of. The manner it is composed in is very elegant. The matter it is composed of is very excellent. 1. The manner it is composed in is very elegant; full of art, rule, method: theological matter in a logical manner, a spiritual alphabet framed and formed according to the Hebrew alphabet. 2. The matter it is composed of is very excellent; full of rare sublimities, deep mysteries, gracious activities, yea, glorious ecstacies. The psalm is made up of three things,—1. prayers, 2. praises, 3. protestations. Prayers to God; praises of God; protestations unto God.—*Rev. W. Simmons, in a sermon in the "Morning Exercises,"* 1661.

*Eulogium.*—This psalm is called the Alphabet of Divine Love, the Paradise of all the Doctrines, the Storehouse of the Holy Spirit, the School of Truth, also the deep mystery of the Scriptures, where the whole moral discipline of all the virtues shines brightly. And as all moral instruction is delightsome, therefore this psalm, because excelling in this kind of instruction, should be called delightsome, inasmuch as it surpasses the rest. The other psalms, truly, as lesser stars shine somewhat; but this burns with the meridian heat of its full brightness, and is wholly resplendent with moral loveliness.—*Johannes Paulus Palanterius*, 1600.

*Eulogium.*—In our German version it has the appropriate inscription, "The Christian's golden A B C of the praise, love, power, and use of the Word of God."—*Franz Delitzsch*, 1871.

*Eulogium.*—It is recorded of the celebrated St. Augustine, who among his voluminous works left a Comment on the Book of Psalms, that he delayed to comment on this one till he had finished the whole Psalter; and then yielded only to the long and vehement urgency of his friends, "because," he says, "as often as I essayed to think thereon, it always exceeded the powers of my intent thought and the utmost grasp of my faculties." While one ancient father† entitles this psalm "the perfection of teaching and instruction"; another‡ says that "it applies an all-containing medicine to the varied spiritual diseases of men—sufficing to perfect those who long for perfect virtue, to rouse the slothful, to refresh the dispirited, and to set in order the relaxed"; to which might be added many like testimonies of ancient and modern commentators on it.—*William De Burgh*, 1860.

*Eulogium.*—In proportion as this psalm seemeth more open, so much the more deep doth it appear to me; so that I cannot show how deep it is. For in others, which are understood with difficulty, although the sense lies hid in obscurity, yet the obscurity itself appeareth; but in this, not even this is the case; since it is superficially such, that it seemeth not to need an expositor, but only a reader and listener.—*Augustine*, 354—430.

*Eulogium.*—In Matthew Henry's "Account of the Life and Death of his father, Philip Henry," he says: "Once, pressing the study of the Scriptures, he advised us to take a verse of this psalm every morning to meditate upon, and so go over the psalm twice in the year; and that, saith he, will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scriptures. He often said, "All grace grows as love to the word of God grows."

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* And like the moon, the feebler fires among,
Conspicuous shines." —*Horace.*

† St. Hilary. ‡ Theodoret.

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*Eulogium.*—It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which was to my child's mind most repulsive—the 119th Psalm—has now become of all the most precious to me in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the law of God.—*John Ruskin, in "Fors Clavigera."*

*Eulogium.*—This psalm is a prolonged meditation upon the excellence of the word of God, upon its effects, and the strength and happiness which it gives to a man in every position. These reflections are interspersed with petitions, in which the psalmist, deeply feeling his natural infirmity, implores the help of God for assistance to walk in the way mapped out for him in the divine oracles. In order to be able to understand and to enjoy this remarkable psalm, and that we may not be repelled by its length and by its repetitions, we must have had, in some measure at least, the same experiences as its author, and, like him, have learned to love and practise the sacred word. Moreover, this psalm is in some sort a touch-stone for the spiritual life of those who read it. The sentiments expressed in it perfectly harmonise with what the historical books and other psalms teach concerning David's obedience and his zeal for God's glory. There are, however, within it words which breathe so elevated a piety, that they can have their full sense and perfect truthfulness only in the mouth of Him of whom the prophet-king was the type.—*From the French of Armand de Mestral*, 1856.

*Eulogium.*—The 119th psalm has been spoken of by a most distinguished living rationalistic critic (Professor Reuss) as "not poetry at all, but simply a litany—a species of chaplet." Such does not seem to be the opinion of the angels of God, and of the redeemed spirits, when that very poem supplies with the language of praise—the pæan of victory, "Just and true are thy ways" (Rev. xv. 3); the cry of the angel of the waters, "Thou art righteous, O Lord!" (Rev. xvi. 5); the voice of much people in heaven, "True and righteous are his judgments" (Rev. xix. 2); what is this but the exclamation of him, whoever he may have been, who wrote the psalm—"Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments" (Psalm cxix. 137).—*William Alexander, in "The Quiver,"* 1880.

*Incident.*—In the midst of a London season; in the stir and turmoil of a political crisis, 1819; William Wilberforce writes in his Diary—"Walked from Hyde Park Corner repeating the 119th Psalm in great comfort."—*William Alexander, in "The Witness of the Psalms."* 1877.

*Incident.*—George Wishart, the chaplain and biographer of "the great Marquis of Montrose," as he was called, would have shared the fate of his illustrious patron but for the following singular expedient. When upon the scaffold, he availed himself of the custom of the times, which permitted the condemned to choose a psalm to be sung. He selected the 119th Psalm, and before two-thirds of the psalm had been sung, a pardon arrived, and his life was preserved. It may not be out of place to add that the George Wishart, Bishop of Edinburgh, above referred to, has been too often confounded with the godly martyr of the same name who lived and died a century previously. We only mention the incident because it has often been quoted as a singular instance of the providential escape of a saintly personage; whereas it was the very ingenious device of a person who, according to Woodrow, was more renowned for shrewdness than for sanctity. The length of this psalm was sagaciously employed as the means of gaining time, and, happily, the expedient succeeded.—*C. H. S.*

*Alphabetical Arrangement.*—It is observed that the 119th Psalm is disposed according to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, perhaps to intimate that children, when they begin to learn their alphabet, should learn that Psalm.—*Nathanael Hardy*, 1618—1670.

*Alphabetical Arrangement.*—True it is that the verses indeed begin not

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either with the English or yet the Latin letters, but with the Hebrew, wherein David made and wrote this psalm. The will and purpose of the Holy Ghost is to make us to feel and understand that the doctrine herein contained is not only set down for great clerks which have gone to school for ten or twenty years; but also for the most simple; to the end none should pretend any excuse of ignorance.—*From Calvin's Two-and-Twenty Sermons upon the cxixth Psalm*, 1580.

*Alphabetical Arrangement.*—There may be something more than fancy in the remark, that Christ's name, "*the Alpha and Omega*"—equivalent to declaring him all that which every letter of the alphabet could express—may have had a reference to the peculiarity of this psalm,—a psalm in which (with the exception of ver. 84 and 122, exceptions that make the rule more marked) every verse speaks of God's revelation of himself to man.—*Andrew A. Bonar*, 1859.

*Alphabetical Arrangement.*—Origen says it is alphabetical because it contains the elements or principles of all knowledge and wisdom; and that it repeats each letter eight times, because eight is the number of perfection.

*Alphabetical Arrangement.*—That the unlearned reader may understand what is meant by the psalm being alphabetical, we append the following specimen upon the section *Aleph*:—

A blessing is on them that are undefiled in the way
and walk in the law of Jehovah;
A blessing is on them that keep his testimonies,
and seek him with their whole heart;
Also on them that do no wickedness,
but walk in his ways.
A law hast thou given unto us,
that we should diligently keep thy commandments.
Ah! Lord, that my ways were made so direct
that I might keep thy statutes!
And then shall I not be confounded,
while I have respect unto all thy commandments.
As for me, I will thank thee with an unfeigned heart,
when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.
An eye will I have unto thy ceremonies,
O forsake me not utterly.

—*From "The Psalms Chronologically Arranged. By Four Friends."* 1867.

*Author and Subject.*—This is a psalm by itself, it excels them all, and shines brightest in this constellation. It is much longer than any of them; more than twice as long as any of them. It is not making long prayers that Christ censures; but making them for a pretence; which intimates that they are in themselves good and commendable. It seems to me to be a collection of David's pious and devout ejaculations, the short and sudden breathings of his soul to God, which he wrote down as they occurred, and towards the latter end of his time gathered them out of his day-book where they lay scattered, added to them many like words, and digested them into this psalm, in which there is seldom any coherence between the verses; but, like Solomon's proverbs, it is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links. And we may not only learn by the psalmist's example to accustom ourselves to such pious ejaculations, which are an excellent means of maintaining constant communion with God, and keeping the heart in frame for the more solemn exercises of religion; but we must make use of the psalmist's words, both for the exciting and the expressing of our devout affections. Some have said of this psalm, He that shall read it considerately, it will either warm him or shame him; and this is true.—*Matthew Henry*, 1662—1714.

*Author and Subject.*—This very singular poem has descended to us without name or title; and with some difficulty in fixing its date. It is by many critics supposed to have been written by King David; and there is in it so

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much of the peculiar language and strain of feeling that distinguish his compositions, with so perpetually shifting a complication of every condition of life through the whole scale of adversity and prosperity, that seems to distinguish his own history from that of every other individual, as to afford much reason for adopting this opinion, and for inducing us to regard it as a series of poems composed originally by David, at different times under different circumstances, or collected by him, and arranged in their present form, from floating passages of antecedent bards, that were in danger of being lost or forgotten. If this view of the subject approaches to correctness, it may constitute one of the poems which Josephus tells us David gave to the public on the re-establishment of tranquillity after the discomfiture of the traitor Sheba, and the return of the ten refractory tribes to a state of loyalty.

This poem, or rather collection of poems, is designed for private devotion, alone; and we have, here, no distinct reference to any historical or national event, to any public festival, or any place of congregational worship; though a few general hints are occasionally scattered upon one or two of these points. We have nothing of David or Solomon, of Moses or Aaron, of Egypt or the journey through the wilderness; nothing of Jerusalem, or Mount Zion, or Ephrata; of the temple, or the altar, of the priests or the people. It consists of the holy effusions of a devout soul, in a state of closet retirement, unbosoming itself in blessed communion with its God, and descanting on the holy cycle of his attributes, and the consolations of his revealed will under every trial to which man can be exposed.

The form of this psalm is singular; and, though alphabetical, it is without an exact parallel in any of the others. It is, in truth, a set or collection of canticles, or smaller poems, each forming a literal octrain or range of eight couplets; the first octrain taking the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet for the opening letter of every line; the second, the second letter, and in the same manner proceeding through the whole extent of the twenty-two letters that constitute the alphabet of the Hebrew tongue; and consequently extending the entire poem to twenty-two octrains or discourses of eight lines each. Poetical collections of this kind are still common in the East, and especially among the Persian poets, who distinguish their separate poems, or canticles, by the name of gazels, and the entire set or fasciculus by that of diwan. By the Arabian poet Temoa they are happily denominated strings of pearls: an idea which the Persian poets have caught hold of, and playfully illustrated in various ways.

From this peculiarity of construction the couplets of Psalm cxix. may, in the Hebrew tongue, be committed to memory with far more ease than in any modern language: for, as each versicle under every octrain commences with the same letter, and the progressive octrains follow up the order of the alphabet, the letter becomes a powerful help to the memory of the learner, and enables him to go through the whole without hesitation.—*John Mason Good*, 1764—1827.

*Author and Subject.*—It is at least possible that the plaited work of so long a psalm, which, in connection with all that is artificial about it from beginning to end gives us a glimpse of the subdued, afflicted mien of a confessor, is the work of one in prison, who whiled away his time with this plaiting together of his complaints and his consolatory thoughts.—*Franz Delitzsch*, 1871.

*Subject.*—The 119th Psalm is the appropriate sermon, after the Hallel, on the text which is its epitome (Ps. i. 1, 2), "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly . . . . . but his delight is in the law of the Lord." Except in two verses (122, 132), the law is expressly extolled in every verse.—*Andrew Robert Fausset, in "Studies in the OL. Psalms,"* 1876.

*Subject.*—Every verse contains in it either a praise of God's word, from

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some excellent quality of it; or a protestation of David his unfeigned affection towards it; or else a prayer for grace, to conform himself unto it; for unto one of these three,—*praises*, *prayers*, or *protestations*, may all the verses of this psalm be reduced.—*William Cowper.*

*Subject.*—I know of no part of the Holy Scriptures where the nature and evidences of true and sincere godliness are so fully and largely insisted on and delineated as in the 119th Psalm. The Psalmist declares his design in the first verses of the psalm, keeps his eye on it all along, and pursues it to the end. The excellency of holiness is represented as the immediate object of a spiritual taste and delight. God's law—that grand expression and emanation of the holiness of God's nature, and prescription of holiness to the creature—is all along represented as the great object of the love, the complacence, and the rejoicing of the gracious nature, which prizes God's commandments "above gold, yea, the finest gold;" and to which they are "sweeter than honey and the honey-comb."—*Jonathan Edwards*, 1703—1758.

*Subject and Connection of its parts.*—This psalm, no less excellent in virtue than large in bulk, containeth manifold reflections on the nature, the properties, the adjuncts, and effects of God's law; many sprightly ejaculations about it, conceived in different forms of speech; some in way of petition, some of thanksgiving, some of resolution, some of assertion or aphorism; many useful directions, many zealous exhortations to the observance of it; the which are not ranged in any strict order, but, like a variety of wholesome herbs in a fair field, do with a grateful confusion lie dispersed, as they freely did spring in the heart, or were suggested by the devout spirit of him who indited this psalm, where no coherence of sentences being designed, we may consider any one of them absolutely, or by itself.—*Isaac Barrow*, 1630—1677.

*Subject and Connection.*—Upon considering the matter of this psalm, it will be found that the stanzas beginning with the same letter have very little, and sometimes not the least connection with each other; and the praises of Jehovah, the excellencies of his law, and supplications, are mingled together without order or coherence. Hence I have been led to think, that the psalm was never intended for an ode to be performed at one time, *tout de suite*, but was a collection of stanzas of prayer and praise arranged in alphabetical order, from which the pious worshipper might select such as suited his situation and circumstances, using, as he saw fit, either one line or two lines of each stanza, and uniting them together so as to make a connected and coherent composition proper for the occasion and the circumstances in which he was.—*Stephen Street*, 1790.

*Subject and Connection.*—In view of the alphabetic or acrostic arrangement of this psalm, Dr. Adam Clarke ventures the following remark:—"All *connection*, as might naturally be expected, is sacrificed to this artificial and methodical arrangement." This is hardly probable, as Dr. Clarke himself felt when he endeavoured in his Analysis "to shew the connection which the eight verses of each part have among themselves." Each group of eight verses seems to have a theme or subject common to itself, and while the peculiar structure of the psalm has obscured this arrangement, so that it is sometimes difficult to trace, it must not be said that the connection is destroyed.—*F. G. Marchant, of Hitchin*, 1879.

*Subject and Connection.*—In stanza *Aleph* the blessedness of walking in the way of God's word is declared; in *Beth*, that word is pronounced to be the only safeguard of the young against sin; in *Gimel*, is a pious resolve to cleave to the word, in spite of the sneers of the world. *Daleth* expresses a longing for the consolation of God's word to fortify good resolutions; *He* declares an earnest desire for grace to obey the word; *Vau* expresses firm trust and intense delight in God's word, and an earnest desire to see its full accomplishment; *Zain* describes the blessed comfort derived from God's

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word in evil days; *Cheth* utters the joy which is inspired by the consciousness that God is his portion, and by communion with those that love his word, and by a persuasion that all things work for good to all who love him; *Teth* describes the blessed effects of affliction, as described in God's word, in weaning the soul from the world and drawing it nearer to him; *Jod* represents the example of the resignation and piety of the faithful, especially in affliction, as gently drawing others to God; *Caph* is an expression of intense desire for the coming of God's kingdom, and the subjection of all things to him, according to the promises of his word. *Lamed* declares that the word of God is everlasting, immutable, and infinite in perfection; and, therefore, in *Mem* it is asserted that God's word is the only treasure-house of true wisdom; and in *Nun*, that it is the only beacon-light in the darkness and storms of this world; and in *Samech*, that all sceptical attempts to undermine men's faith in that word are hateful and deadly, and will recoil with confusion on those that make them; and in *Ain*, is a prayer for steadfastness and soundness of heart and mind, amid all the impiety and unbelief of a godless world; which is followed by an assurance in *Pe*, that the word of God brings its own light and comfort with it to those who earnestly pray for them, and fills the heart with compassion for those who despise it. In *Tzaddi* is a declaration that even the youthful soul may stand strong and steadfast, if it has faith in the purity, and truth, and righteousness of God's law; and therefore in *Koph*, is an earnest prayer for the grace of faith, especially, as is expressed in *Resh*, in times of affliction, desolation, and persecution, as *Schin* adds, from the powerful of this world; but even then there is peace, joy, and exultation for those who love God's word. And therefore the psalm concludes, in *Tau*, with an earnest prayer for the bestowal of the gifts of understanding, assistance, and grace from God, to the soul which owns its weakness, and rests on him alone for support.—*Christopher Wordsworth*, 1872.

*Subject and Connection.*—This psalm has been called *Psalmus literatus*, or *alphabetites;* and the Masora calls it alpa betha rabba. The name Jehovah occurs twenty-two times in the psalm. Its theme is the word of God, which it mentions under one of the ten terms, תּוֹרָה, *law;* דֶּרֶךְ, *way;* עֵדוּת, *testimony;* פִּקּוּד, *precept;* חֹק, *statute;* מִצְוָה, *commandments;* מִשְׁפָּט, *judgment;* דָּבָר, *word;* אִמְרָה, *saying;* אֱמוּנָה, *truth;* in every verse except verse 122. The last of these terms is scarcely admissible as a term for the *word;* but it has to suffice only in verse 90. According to this alphabetical series of eight stanzas, the word is the source of happiness to those who walk by it (*aleph*), of holiness to those who give heed to it (*beth*), of truth to those whose eyes the Lord opens by his Spirit (*gimel*), of law to those whose heart he renews (*daleth*), begets perseverance by its promises (*he*), reveals the mercy and salvation of the Lord (*vau*), awakens the comfort of hope in God (*zayin*), presents the Lord as the portion of the trusting soul (*cheth*), makes affliction instructive and chastening (*teth*), begets a fellowship in the fear of God (*jod*), and a longing for the full peace of salvation (*kaph*), is faithful and immutable (*lamed*), commands the approval of the heart (*mem*), is a light to the path (*nun*), from which to swerve is hateful (*samek*), warrants the plea of innocence (*ayin*), is a testimony to God's character and will (*pe*), is a law of rectitude (*tsade*), warrants the cry for salvation (*qoph*), and prayer for deliverance from affliction (*resh*), and from persecution without a cause (*shin*), and assures of an answer in due time (*tau*). There is here as much order as could be expected in a long alphabetical acrostic.—*James G. Murphy, in a "Commentary on the Book of Psalms,"* 1875.

*Whole Psalm.*—Dr. Luther and Hilary, and other excellent men, think that here a compendium of the whole of theology is briefly set forth: for the things which are said, generally, about the Scripture, and the word of God, and theology, are helpful to the examination of doctrinal questions. In

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the first place, it speaks of the author of that doctrine. Secondly, of its authority and certainty. Thirdly, it is declared that the doctrine, contained in the Apostolic and Prophetic books, is perfect, and contains all things which are able to give us instruction unto everlasting salvation. Fourthly, it affirms the perspicuity of the Scripture. Fifthly, its usefulness. Sixthly, its true and saving knowledge and interpretation. Lastly, it treats of practice; how, for instance, the things which we are taught in the word of God are to be manifested and reduced to practice, in piety, moderation, obedience, faith, and hope, in temptations and adversities.—*Solomon Gesner*, 1559—1605.

*Names given to the Law of God.*—The things contained in Scripture, and drawn from it, are here called, 1. God's *law*, because they are enacted by him as our Sovereign. 2. His *way*, because they are the rule both of his providence and of our obedience. 3. His *testimonies*, because they are solemnly declared to the world, and attested beyond contradiction. 4. His *commandments*, because given with authority, and (as the word signifies) lodged with us as a trust. 5. His *precepts*, because prescribed to us, and not left indifferent. 6. His *word*, or saying, because it is the declaration of his mind, and Christ the essential, eternal Word is all in all in it. 7. His *judgments*, because framed in infinite wisdom, and because by them we must both judge and be judged. 8. His *righteousness*, because it is all holy, just, and good, and the rule and standard of righteousness. 9. His *statutes*, because they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. 10. His *truth* or *faithfulness*, because the principles upon which divine law is built are eternal truths.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Names given to the Law of God.*—The next peculiarity to be observed in this psalm is, the regular recurrence of nine characteristic words, at least one or other of which is found in each distich, with one solitary exception, the second distich of the 12th division. These words—*law*, *testimonies*, *precepts*, *statutes*, *commandments*, *judgments*, *word*, *saying*, and a word which only twice occurs as a characteristic—*way*.

These are, doubtless, all designations of the Divine Law; but it were doing a deep injury to the cause of revealed truth to affirm that they are mere synonyms; in other words, that the sentiments of this compendium of heavenly wisdom are little better than a string of tautologies. The fact is, as some critics, both Jewish and Christian, have observed, that each of these terms designates the same law of God, but each under a different aspect, signifying the different modes of its promulgation, and of its reception.

Each of these words will now be examined in order, and an attempt will be made to discriminate them.

1. "*Law.*" This word is formed from a verb which means to direct, to guide, to aim, to shoot forwards. Its etymological meaning, then, would be a rule of conduct, a κανὼν σαφὴς. It means God's law in general, whether it be that universal rule called the law of nature, or that which was revealed to his Church by Moses, and perfected by Christ. In strictness, the law means a plain rule of conduct, rather placed clearly in man's sight, than enforced by any command; that is to say, this word does not necessarily include its sanctions.

2. "*Testimonies*" are derived from a word which signifies to bear witness, to testify. The ark of the tabernacle is so called as are the two tables of stone, and the tabernacle; the earnests and witnesses of God's inhabitation among his people. Testimonies are more particularly God's revealed law; the witnesses and confirmation of his promises made to his people, and earnests of his future salvation.

3. "*Precepts.*" from a word which means *to place in trust*, mean something entrusted to man, "that is committed to thee"; appointments of God,

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which consequently have to do with this conscience, for which man is responsible, as an intelligent being.

4. "*Statutes.*" The verb from which this word is formed means to engrave or inscribe. The word means a definite, prescribed, written law. The term is applied to Joseph's law about the portion of the priests in Egypt, to the law about the passover, etc. But in this psalm it has a more internal meaning;—that moral law of God which is engraven on the fleshy tables of the heart; the inmost and spiritual apprehension of his will: not so obvious as the law and testimonies, and a matter of more direct spiritual communciation than his precepts; the latter being more elaborated by the efforts of the mind itself, divinely guided indeed, but perhaps more instrumentally, and less passively employed.

5. "*Commandments,*" derived from a verb signifying to command or ordain. Such was God's command to Adam about the tree; to Noah about constructing the ark.

6. "*Judgments,*" derived from a word signifying to govern, to judge or determine, mean judicial ordinances and decisions; legal sanctions.

7. "*Word.*" There are two terms, quite distinct in the Hebrew, but both rendered "*word,*" in each of our authorized versions. The latter of these is rendered "*saying*" in the former volume of this work. They are closely connected: since out of twenty-two passages in which "*word*" occurs, in fourteen it is parallel to it, or in connection with, "*saying.*" From this very circumstance it is evident they are not synonymous.

The term here rendered "*word*" seems the Λογος, or Word of God, in its most divine sense; the announcement of God's revealed will; his command; his oracle; at times, the special communication to the prophets. The ten commandments are called by this term in Exodus; and דְּבִיר is the oracle in the temple. In this psalm it may be considered as,—(1). God's revealed commandments in general. (2). As a revealed promise of certain blessings to the righteous. (3). As a thing committed to him as the minister of God. (4). As a rule of conduct; a channel of illumination.

8. As to the remaining word "*way,*" that occurs but twice as a characteristic word, and the places in which it occurs must rather be considered as exceptions to the general rule; so that I am not disposed to consider it as intended to be a cognate expression with the above. At all events, its meaning is so direct and simple as to require no explanation; a plain rule of conduct; in its higher sense, the assisting grace of God through Christ our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.—*John Jebb,* 1846.

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 1 TO 8.

BLESSED *are* the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

2 Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, *and that* seek him with the whole heart.

3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

4 Thou hast commanded *us* to keep thy precepts diligently.

5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

*These first eight verses are taken up with a contemplation of the blessedness which comes through keeping the statutes of the Lord. The subject is treated in a devout manner rather than in a didactic style. Heart-fellowship with God is enjoyed through a love of that word which is God's way of communing with the soul by his Holy Spirit. Prayer and praise and all sorts of devotional acts and feelings gleam through the verses like beams of sunlight through an olive grove. You are not only instructed, but influenced to holy emotion, and helped to express the same.*

*Lovers of God's holy words are blessed, because they are preserved from defilement (verse 1), because they are made practically holy (verses 2 and 3), and are led to follow after God sincerely and intensely (verse 2). It is seen that this holy walking must be desirable because God commands it (verse 4); therefore the pious soul prays for it (verse 5), and feels that its comfort and courage must depend upon obtaining it (verse 6). In the prospect of answered prayer, yea, while the prayer is being answered, the heart is full of thankfulness (verse 7), and is fixed in solemn resolve not to miss the blessing if the Lord will give enabling grace (verse 8).*

*The changes are rung upon the words "way"—"undefiled in the way," "walk in his ways," "O that my ways were directed": "keep"—"keep his testimonies," "keep thy precepts diligently," "directed to keep," "I will keep": and "walk"—"walk in the law," "walk in his ways." Yet there is no tautology, nor is the same thought repeated, though to the careless reader it may seem so.*

*The change from statements about others and about the Lord to more personal dealing with God begins in the third verse, and becomes more and more clear as we advance, till in the later verses the communion becomes most intense and soul-moving. O that every reader may feel the glow which is poured over the verses as they proceed: he will then begin as a reader, but he will soon bow as a suppliant; his study will become an oratory, and his contemplation will warm into adoration. The one subject is the Bible, that we can all take with us, but we shall fail unless the Spirit who is the Inspirer of the sacred law shall hide it in our hearts, and shed abroad within us a fervent love to its precepts and statutes. So may it be.*

1. "*Blessed.*" The Psalmist is so enraptured with the word of God that he regards it as his highest ideal of blessedness to be conformed to it. He has gazed on the beauties of the perfect law, and, as if this verse were the sum and outcome of all his emotions, he exclaims, "Blessed is the man whose life is the practical transcript of the will of God." True religion is not cold and dry; it has its exclamations and raptures. We not only judge the keeping of God's law to be a wise and proper thing, but we are warmly enamoured of its holiness, and cry out in adoring wonder, "Blessed are the undefiled!" meaning thereby, that we eagerly desire to become such ourselves, and wish for no greater happiness than to be perfectly holy. It may be that the writer laboured under a sense of his own faultiness, and therefore envied the blessedness of those whose walk had been more pure and

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clean; indeed, the very contemplation of the perfect law of the Lord upon which he now entered was quite enough to make him bemoan his own imperfections, and sigh for the blessedness of an undefiled walk.

True religion is always practical, for it does not permit us to delight ourselves in a perfect rule without exciting in us a longing to be conformed to it in our daily lives. A blessing belongs to those who hear and read and understand the word of the Lord; yet is it a far greater blessing to be actually obedient to it, and to carry out in our walk and conversation what we learn in our searching of the Scriptures. Purity in our way and walk is the truest blessedness.

This first verse is not only a preface to the whole psalm, but it may also be regarded as the text upon which the rest is a discourse. It is similar to the benediction of the first psalm, which is set in the forefront of the entire book: there is a likeness between this 119th Psalm and the Psalter, and this is one point of it, that it begins with a benediction. In this, too, we see some foreshadowings of the Son of David, who began his great sermon as David began his great psalm. It is well to open our mouth with blessings. When we cannot bestow them, we can shew the way of obtaining them, and even if we do not yet possess them ourselves, it may be profitable to contemplate them, that our desires may be excited, and our souls moved to seek after them. Lord, if I am not yet so blessed as to be among the undefiled in thy way, yet I will think much of the happiness which these enjoy, and set it before me as my life's ambition.

As David thus begins his psalm, so should young men begin their lives, so should new converts commence their profession, so should all Christians begin every day. Settle it in your hearts as a first postulate and sure rule of practical science that holiness is happiness, and that it is our wisdom first to seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. Well begun is half done. To start with a true idea of blessedness is beyond measure important. Man began with being blessed in his innocence, and if our fallen race is ever to be blessed again, it must find it where it lost it at the beginning, namely, in conformity to the command of the Lord.

"*The undefiled in the way.*" They are in the way, the right way, the way of the Lord, and they keep that way, walking with holy carefulness and washing their feet daily, lest they be found spotted by the flesh. They enjoy great blessedness in their own souls; indeed, they have a foretaste of heaven where the blessedness lieth much in being absolutely undefiled; and could they continue utterly and altogether without defilement, doubtless they would have the days of heaven upon the earth. Outward evil would little hurt us if we were entirely rid of the evil of sin, an attainment which with the best of us lies still in the region of desire, and is not yet fully reached, though we have so clear a view of it that we see it to be blessedness itself; and therefore we eagerly press towards it.

He whose life is in a gospel sense undefiled, is blessed, because he could never have reached this point if a thousand blessings had not already been bestowed on him. By nature we are defiled and out of the way, and we must therefore have been washed in the atoning blood to remove defilement, and we must have been converted by the power of the Holy Ghost, or we should not have been turned into the way of peace, nor be undefiled in it. Nor is this all, for the continual power of grace is needed to keep a believer in the right way, and to preserve him from pollution. All the blessings of the covenant must have been in a measure poured upon those who from day to day have been unable to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Their way is the evidence of their being the blessed of the Lord.

David speaks of a high degree of blessedness; for some are in the way, and are true servants of God, but they are as yet faulty in many ways and bring defilement upon themselves. Others who walk in the light more fully, and maintain closer communion with, God are enabled to keep

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themselves unspotted from the world, and these enjoy far more peace and joy than their less watchful brethren. Doubtless, the more complete our sanctification the more intense our blessedness. Christ is our way, and we are not only alive in Christ, but we are to live in Christ: the sorrow is that we bespatter his holy way with our selfishness, self-exaltation, wilfulness, and carnality, and so we miss a great measure of the blessedness which is in him as our way. A believer who errs is still saved, but the joy of his salvation is not experienced by him; he is rescued but not enriched, greatly borne with, but not greatly blessed.

How easily may defilement come upon us even in our holy things, yea, even *in the way*. We may even come from public or private worship with defilement upon the conscience gathered when we were on our knees. There was no floor to the tabernacle but the desert sand, and hence the priests at the altar were under frequent necessity to wash their feet, and by the kind foresight of their God the laver stood ready for their cleansing, even as for us our Lord Jesus still stands ready to wash our feet, that we may be clean every whit. Thus our text sets forth the blessedness of the apostles in the upper room when Jesus had said of them, "Ye are clean."

What blessedness awaits those who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and are preserved from the evil which is in the world through lust. These shall be the envy of all mankind "in that day." Though now they despise them as precise fanatics and Puritans, the most prosperous of sinners shall then wish that they could change places with them. O my soul, seek thou thy blessedness in following hard after thy Lord, who was holy, harmless, undefiled; for there hast thou found peace hitherto, and there wilt thou find it for ever.

"*Who walk in the law of the* LORD." In them is found habitual holiness. Their walk, their common everyday life is obedience unto the Lord. They live by rule, that rule the command of the Lord God. Whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, they do all in the name of their great Master and Exemplar. To them religion is nothing out of the way, it is their everyday walk: it moulds their common actions as well as their special devotions. This ensures blessedness. He who walks in God's law walks in God's company, and he must be blessed; he has God's smile, God's strength, God's secret with him, and how can he be otherwise than blessed?

The holy life is a walk, a steady progress, a quiet advance, a lasting continuance. Enoch walked with God. Good men always long to be better, and hence they go forward. Good men are never idle, and hence they do not lie down or loiter, but they are still walking onward to their desired end. They are not hurried, and worried, and flurried, and so they keep the even tenor of their way, walking steadily towards heaven; and they are not in perplexity as to how to conduct themselves, for they have a perfect rule, which they are happy to walk by. The law of the Lord is not irksome to them; its commandments are not grievous, and its restrictions are not slavish in their esteem. It does not appear to them to be an impossible law, theoretically admirable but practically absurd, but they walk by it and in it. They do not consult it now and then as a sort of rectifier of their wanderings, but they use it as a chart for their daily sailing, a map of the road for their life-journey. Nor do they ever regret that they have entered upon the path of obedience, else they would leave it, and that without difficulty, for a thousand temptations offer them opportunity to return; their continued walk in the law of the Lord is their best testimony to the blessedness of such a condition of life. Yes, they are blessed even now. The Psalmist himself bore witness to the fact: he had tried and proved it, and wrote it down as a fact which defied all denial. Here it stands in the forefront of David's *magnum opus*, written on the topmost line of his greatest psalm—"BLESSED ARE THEY WHO WALK IN THE LAW OF THE LORD." Rough may be the way, stern the rule, hard the discipline,—all these we know and

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more,—but a thousand heaped-up blessednesses are still found in godly living, for which we bless the Lord.

We have in this verse blessed persons who enjoy five blessed things, A blessed way, blessed purity, a blessed law, given by a blessed Lord, and a blessed walk therein; to which we may add the blessed testimony of the Holy Ghost given in this very passage that they are in very deed the blessed of the Lord.

The blessedness which is thus set before us we must aim at, but we must not think to obtain it without earnest effort. David has a great deal to say about it; his discourse in this psalm is long and solemn, and it is a hint to us that the way of perfect obedience is not learned in a day; there must be precept upon precept, line upon line, and after efforts long enough to be compared with the 176 verses of this psalm we may still have to cry, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments."

It must, however, be our plan to keep the word of the Lord much upon our minds; for this discourse upon blessedness has for its pole-star the testimony of the Lord, and only by daily communion with the Lord by his word can we hope to learn his way, to be purged from defilement, and to be made to walk in his statutes. We set out upon this exposition with blessedness before us; we see the way to it, and we know where the law of it is to be found: let us pray that as we pursue our meditation we may grow into the habit and walk of obedience, and so feel the blessedness of which we read.

2. "*Blessed are they that keep his testimonies.*" What! A second blessing? Yes, they are doubly blessed whose outward life is supported by an inward zeal for God's glory. In the first verse we had an undefiled way, and it was taken for granted that the purity in the way was not mere surface work, but was attended by the inward truth and life which comes of divine grace. Here that which was implied is expressed. Blessedness is ascribed to those who treasure up the testimonies of the Lord: in which is implied that they search the Scriptures, that they come to an understanding of them, that they love them, and then that they continue in the practice of them. We must first get a thing before we can keep it. In order to keep it well we must get a firm grip of it: we cannot keep in the heart that which we have not heartily embraced by the affections. God's word is his witness or testimony to grand and important truths which concern himself and our relation to him: this we should desire to know; knowing it, we should believe it; believing it, we should love it; and loving it, we should hold it fast against all comers. There is a doctrinal keeping of the word when we are ready to die for its defence, and a practical keeping of it when we actually live under its power. Revealed truth is precious as diamonds, and should be kept or treasured up in the memory and in the heart as jewels in a casket, or as the law was kept in the ark; this however is not enough, for it is meant for practical use, and therefore it must be kept or followed, as men keep to a path, or to a line of business. If we keep God's testimonies they will keep us; they will keep us right in opinion, comfortable in spirit, holy in conversation, and hopeful in expectation. If they were ever worth having, and no thoughtful person will question that, then they are worth keeping; their designed effect does not come through a temporary seizure of them, but by a persevering keeping of them: "in keeping of them there is great reward."

We are bound to keep with all care the word of God, because it is *his* testimonies. He gave them to us, but they are still his own. We are to keep them as a watchman guards his master's house, as a steward husbands his lord's goods, as a shepherd keeps his employer's flock. We shall have to give an account, for we are put in trust with the gospel, and woe to us if we be found unfaithful. We cannot fight a good fight, nor finish our course, unless we keep the faith. To this end the Lord must keep us: only

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those who are kept by the power of God unto salvation will ever be able to keep his testimonies. What a blessedness is therefore evidenced and testified by a careful belief in God's word, and a continual obedience thereunto. God has blessed them, is blessing them, and will bless them for ever. That blessedness which David saw in others he realized for himself, for in verse 168 he says, "I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies," and in verses 54 to 56 he traces his joyful songs and happy memories to this same keeping of the law, and he confesses, "This I had because I kept thy precepts." Doctrines which we teach to others we should experience for ourselves.

"*And that seek him with the whole heart.*" Those who keep the Lord's testimonies are sure to seek after himself. If his word is precious we may be sure that he himself is still more so. Personal dealing with a personal God is the longing of all those who have allowed the word of the Lord to have its full effect upon them. If we once really know the power of the gospel we must seek the God of the gospel. "O that I knew where I might find HIM," will be our whole-hearted cry. See the growth which these sentences indicate: first, in the way, then walking in it, then finding and keeping the treasure of truth, and to crown all, seeking after the Lord of the way himself. Note also that the further a soul advances in grace the more spiritual and divine are its longings: an outward walk does not content the gracious soul, nor even the treasured testimonies; it reaches out in due time after God himself, and when it in a measure finds him, still yearns for more of him, and seeks him still.

Seeking after God signifies a desire to commune with him more closely, to follow him more fully, to enter into more perfect union with his mind and will, to promote his glory, and to realize completely all that he is to holy hearts. The blessed man has God already, and for this reason he seeks him. This may seem a contradiction: it is only a paradox.

God is not truly sought by the cold researches of the brain: we must seek him with the heart. Love reveals itself to love: God manifests his heart to the heart of his people. It is in vain that we endeavour to comprehend him by reason; we must apprehend him by affection. But the heart must not be divided with many objects if the Lord is to be sought by us. God is one, and we shall not know him till our heart is one. A broken heart need not be distressed at this, for no heart is so whole in its seekings after God as a heart which is broken, whereof every fragment sighs and cries after the great Father's face. It is the divided heart which the doctrine of the text censures, and strange to say, in scriptural phraseology, a heart may be divided and not broken, and it may be broken but not divided; and yet again it may be broken and be whole, and it never can be whole until it is broken. When our whole heart seeks the holy God in Christ Jesus it has come to him of whom it is written, "as many as touched Him were made perfectly whole."

That which the Psalmist admires in this verse he claims in the tenth, where he says, "With my whole heart have I sought thee." It is well when admiration of a virtue leads to the attainment of it. Those who do not believe in the blessedness of seeking the Lord will not be likely to arouse their hearts to the pursuit, but he who calls another blessed because of the grace which he sees in him is on the way to gaining the same grace for himself.

If those who *seek* the Lord are blessed, what shall be said of those who actually dwell with him and know that he is theirs?

"To those who fall, how kind thou art!
How good to those who seek!
But what to those who find? Ah! this
Nor tongue nor pen can show:
The love of Jesus—what it is,
None but his loved ones know."

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3. "*They also do no iniquity.*" Blessed indeed would those men be of whom this could be asserted without reserve and without explanation: we shall have reached the region of pure blessedness when we altogether cease from sin. Those who follow the word of God do no iniquity, the rule is perfect, and if it be constantly followed no fault will arise. Life, to the outward observer, at any rate, lies much in doing, and he who in his doings never swerves from equity, both towards God and man, has hit upon the way of perfection, and we may be sure that his heart is right. See how a whole heart leads to the avoidance of evil, for the Psalmist says, "That seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity." We fear that no man can claim to be absolutely without sin, and yet we trust there are many who do not designedly, wilfully, knowingly, and continuously do anything that is wicked, ungodly, or unjust. Grace keeps the life righteous as to act even when the Christian has to bemoan the transgressions of the heart. Judged as men should be judged by their fellows, according to such just rules as men make for men, the true people of God do no iniquity: they are honest, upright, and chaste, and touching justice and morality they are blameless. Therefore are they happy.

"*They walk in his ways.*" They attend not only to the great main highway of the law, but to the smaller paths of the particular precepts. As they will perpetrate no sin of commission, so do they labour to be free from every sin of omission. It is not enough to them to be blameless, they wish also to be actively righteous. A hermit may escape into solitude that he may do no iniquity, but a saint lives in society that he may serve his God by walking in his ways. We must be positively as well as negatively right: we shall not long keep the second unless we attend to the first, for men will be walking one way or another, and if they do not follow the path of God's law they will soon do iniquity. The surest way to abstain from evil is to be fully occupied in doing good. This verse describes believers as they exist among us: although they have their faults and infirmities, yet they hate evil, and will not permit themselves to do it; they love the ways of truth, right and true godliness, and habitually they walk therein. They do not claim to be absolutely perfect except in their desires, and there they are pure indeed, for they pant to be kept from all sin, and to be led into all holiness.

4. "*Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.*" So that when we have done all we are unprofitable servants, we have done only that which it was our duty to have done, seeing we have our Lord's command for it. God's precepts require *careful* obedience: there is no keeping them by accident. Some give to God a careless service, a sort of hit or miss obedience, but the Lord has not commanded such service, nor will he accept it. His law demands the love of all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and a careless religion has none of these. We are also called to *zealous* obedience. We are to keep the precepts abundantly: the vessels of obedience should be filled to the brim, and the command carried out to the full of its meaning. As a man diligent in business arouses himself to do as much trade as he can, so must we be eager to serve the Lord as much as possible. Nor must we spare pains to do so, for a diligent obedience will also be *laborious and self-denying.* Those who are diligent in business rise up early and sit up late, and deny themselves much of comfort and repose. They are not soon tired, or if they are they persevere even with aching brow and weary eye. So should we serve the Lord. Such a Master deserves diligent servants; such service he demands, and will be content with nothing less. How seldom do men render it, and hence many through their negligence miss the double blessing spoken of in this psalm.

Some are diligent in superstition and will worship; be it ours to be diligent in keeping God's precepts. It is of no use travelling fast if we are not in the right road. Men have been diligent in a losing business, and

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the more they have traded the more they have lost: this is bad enough in commerce, we cannot afford to have it so in our religion.

God has not commanded us to be diligent in *making* precepts, but in *keeping* them. Some bind yokes upon their own necks, and make bonds and rules for others: but the wise course is to be satisfied with the rules of holy Scripture, and to strive to keep them all, in all places, towards all men, and in all respects. If we do not this, we may become eminent in our own religion, but we shall not have kept the command of God, nor shall we be accepted of him.

The Psalmist began with the third person: he is now coming near home, and has already reached the first person plural, according to our version; we shall soon hear him crying out personally and for himself. As the heart glows with love to holiness, we long to have a personal interest in it. The word of God is a heart-affecting book, and when we begin to sing its praises it soon comes home to us, and sets us praying to be ourselves conformed to its teachings.

5. "*O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*" Divine commands should direct us in the subject of our prayers. We cannot of ourselves keep God's statutes as he would have them kept, and yet we long to do so: what resort have we but prayer? We must ask the Lord to work our works in us, or we shall never work out his commandments. This verse is a sigh of regret because the Psalmist feels that he has not kept the precepts diligently, it is a cry of weakness appealing for help to one who can aid, it is a request of bewilderment from one who has lost his way and would fain be directed in it, and it is a petition of faith from one who loves God and trusts in him for grace.

Our ways are by nature opposed to the way of God, and must be turned by the Lord's direction in another direction from that which they originally take or they will lead us down to destruction. God can direct the mind and will without violating our free agency, and he will do so in answer to prayer; in fact, he has begun the work already in those who are heartily praying after the fashion of this verse. It is for present holiness that the desire arises in the heart. O that it were so now with me: but future persevering holiness is also meant, for he longs for grace to keep henceforth and for ever the statutes of the Lord.

The sigh of the text is really a prayer, though it does not exactly take that form. Desires and longings are of the essence of supplication, and it little matters what shape they take. "O that" is as acceptable a prayer as "Our Father."

One would hardly have expected a prayer for direction; rather should we have looked for a petition for enabling. Can we not direct ourselves? What if we cannot row, we can steer. The Psalmist herein confesses that even for the smallest part of his duty he felt unable without grace. He longed for the Lord to influence his will, as well as to strengthen his hands. We want a rod to point out the way as much as a staff to support us in it.

The longing of the text is prompted by admiration of the blessedness of holiness, by a contemplation of the righteous man's beauty of character, and by a reverent awe of the command of God. It is a personal application to the writer's own case of the truths which he had been considering. "O that *my* ways," etc. It were well if all who hear and read the word would copy this example and turn all that they hear into prayer. We should have more keepers of the statutes if we had more who sighed and cried after the grace to do so.

6. "*Then shall I not be ashamed.*" He had known shame, and here he rejoices in the prospect of being freed from it. Sin brings shame, and when sin is gone, the reason for being ashamed is banished. What a deliverance this is, for to some men death is preferable to shame! "*When I have respect unto all thy commandments.*" When he respects God he shall



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respect himself and be respected. Whenever we err we prepare ourselves for confusion of face and sinking of heart: if no one else is ashamed of me I shall be ashamed of myself if I do iniquity. Our first parents never knew shame till they made the acquaintance of the old serpent, and it never left them till their gracious God had covered them with sacrificial skins. Disobedience made them naked and ashamed. We, ourselves, will always have cause for shame till every sin is vanquished, and every duty is observed. When we pay a continual and universal respect to the will of the Lord, then we shall be able to look ourselves in the face in the looking-glass of the law, and we shall not blush at the sight of men or devils, however eager their malice may be to lay somewhat to our charge.

Many suffer from excessive diffidence, and this verse suggests a cure. An abiding sense of duty will make us bold, we shall be afraid to be afraid. No shame in the presence of man will hinder us when the fear of God has taken full possession of our minds. When we are on the king's highway by daylight, and are engaged upon royal business, we need ask no man's leave. It would be a dishonour to a king to be ashamed of his livery and his service; no such shame should ever crimson the cheek of a Christian, nor will it if he has due reverence for the Lord his God. There is nothing to be ashamed of in a holy life; a man may be ashamed of his pride, ashamed of his wealth, ashamed of his own children, but he will never be ashamed of having in all things regarded the will of the Lord his God.

It is worthy of remark that David promises himself no immunity from shame till he has carefully paid homage to all the precepts. Mind that word "*all*," and leave not one command out of your respect. Partial obedience still leaves us liable to be called to account for those commands which we have neglected. A man may have a thousand virtues, and yet a single failing may cover him with shame.

To a poor sinner who is buried in despair, it may seem a very unlikely thing that he should ever be delivered from shame. He blushes, and is confounded, and feels that he can never lift up his face again. Let him read these words: "Then shall I not be ashamed." David is not dreaming, nor picturing an impossible case. Be assured, dear friend, that the Holy Spirit can renew in you the image of God, so that you shall yet look up without fear. O for sanctification to direct us in God's way, for then shall we have boldness both towards God and his people, and shall no more crimson with confusion.

7. "*I will praise thee.*" From prayer to praise is never a long or a difficult journey. Be sure that he who prays for holiness will one day praise for happiness. Shame having vanished, silence is broken, and the formerly silent man declares, "I will praise thee." He cannot but promise praise while he seeks sanctification. Mark how well he knows upon what head to set the crown. "I will praise *thee*." He would himself be praiseworthy, but he counts God alone worthy of praise. By the sorrow and shame of sin he measures his obligations to the Lord who would teach him the art of living so that he should clean escape from his former misery.

"*With uprightness of heart.*" His heart would be upright if the Lord would teach him, and then it should praise its teacher. There is such a thing as false and feigned praise, and this the Lord abhors; but there is no music like that which comes from a pure soul which standeth in its integrity. Heart praise is required, uprightness in that heart, and teaching to make the heart upright. An upright heart is sure to bless the Lord, for grateful adoration is a part of its uprightness; no man can be right unless he is upright towards God, and this involves the rendering to him the praise which is his due.

"*When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.*" We must learn to praise, learn that we may praise, and praise when we have learned. If we are ever to learn, the Lord must teach us, and especially upon such a subject

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as his judgments, for they are a great deep. While these are passing before our eyes, and we are learning from them, we ought to praise God, for the original is not, "when I have learned," but, "in my learning." While yet I am a scholar I will be a chorister: my upright heart shall praise thine uprightness, my purified judgment shall admire thy judgments. God's providence is a book full of teaching, and to those whose hearts are right it is a music book, out of which they chant to Jehovah's praise. God's word is full of the record of his righteous providences, and as we read it we feel compelled to burst forth into expressions of holy delight and ardent praise. When we both read of God's judgments and become joyful partakers in them, we are doubly moved to song—song in which there is neither formality, nor hypocrisy, nor lukewarmness, for the heart is upright in the presentation of its praise.

8. "*I will keep thy statutes.*" A calm resolve. When praise calms down into solid resolution it is well with the soul. Zeal which spends itself in singing, and leaves no practical residuum of holy living, is little worth: "I will praise" should be coupled with "I will keep." This firm resolve is by no means boastful, like Peter's "though I should die with thee, yet will I not forsake thee," for it is followed by a humble prayer for divine help, "*O forsake me not utterly.*" Feeling his own incapacity, he trembles lest he should be left to himself, and this fear is increased by the horror which he has of falling into sin. The "I will keep" sounds rightly enough now that the humble cry is heard with it. This is a happy amalgam: resolution and dependence. We meet with those who to all appearance humbly pray, but there is no force of character, no decision in them, and consequently the pleading of the closet is not embodied in the life: on the other hand, we meet with abundance of resolve attended with an entire absence of dependence upon God, and this makes as poor a character as the former. The Lord grant us to have such a blending of excellences that we may be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

This prayer is one which is certain to be heard, for assuredly it must be highly pleasing to God to see a man set upon obeying his will, and therefore it must be most agreeable to him to be present with such a person, and to help him in his endeavours. How can he forsake one who does not forsake his law?

The peculiar dread which tinges this prayer with a sombre hue is the fear of utter forsaking. Well may the soul cry out against such a calamity. To be left, that we may discover our weakness, is a sufficient trial: to be altogether forsaken would be ruin and death. Hiding the face in a little wrath for a moment brings us very low: an absolute desertion would land us ultimately in the lowest hell. But the Lord never has utterly forsaken his servants, and he never will, blessed be his name. If we long to keep his statutes he will keep us; yea, his grace will keep us keeping his law.

There is rather a descent from the mount of benediction with which the first verse began to the almost wail of this eighth verse, yet this is spiritually a growth, for from admiration of goodness we have come to a burning longing after God and communion with him, and an intense horror lest it should not be enjoyed. The sigh of verse 5 is now supplanted by an actual prayer from the depths of a heart conscious of its undesert, and its entire dependence upon divine love. The two, "I wills" needed to be seasoned with some such lowly petition, or it might have been thought that the good man's dependence was in some degree fixed upon his own determination. He presents his resolutions like a sacrifice, but he cries to heaven for the fire.

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## NOTES ON THE VERSES.

*The first eight verses commence with Aleph, and may be alphabetically rendered thus:—*

1. All they that are undefiled in the way, walking in the law of the Lord, are blessed.
2. All they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart, are blessed.
3. Also they do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.
4. All thy precepts diligently to keep thou hast commanded us.
5. Ah, Lord! that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!
6. Ashamed I shall never be, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.
7. Always will I praise thee, with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.
8. All thy statutes will I keep: O forsake me not utterly.

*Pastor Theodore Kübler, of Islington*, 1880.

*Whole eight verses*, 1—8.—Every line begins with Aleph, to which the Jews ascribe the meaning of *an ox*, that is, the beast of useful service, and thus of many blessings. Key of the section: "O the blessings."—*F. G. Marchant.*

*Whole eight verses*, 1—8.—These eight verses teach that true piety is sincere, consistent, practical, hearty, intelligent, earnest, active, stirring, diligent, humble, distrustful of itself, systematical, guileless, unspotted from the world, self-renouncing, confident in God, delighting in thankfulness, fully purposed to keep the law, and as ready to confess that without divine grace it can do nothing.

They also teach us how great is the sin of not believing God's word. As it is a law, the faithless refuse to walk by it; as it is a testimony, they refuse to believe their Maker; as it demands righteousness, they refuse to seek it; as it gives precepts, they will not obey them; as it ordains statutes, they rebel against them; as it has excellent commandments, they stand out in opposition to them; as it abounds with righteous judgments, they refuse to stand by them. They will not pray for grace; they will not praise God for mercies received; they do not feel their dependence or impotence, and they never look to the Father of lights from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.—*William S. Plumer*,—1880.

*Verse* 1.—"*Blessed.*" The Psalmist beginneth with a description of the way to true blessedness, as Christ began his Sermon on the Mount, and as the whole Book of Psalms is elsewhere begun. Blessedness is that which we all aim at, only we are either ignorant or reckless of the way that leadeth to it, therefore the holy Psalmist would first set us right as to the true notion of a blessed man: "*Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the* LORD."—*Thomas Manton*, 1620—1677.

*Verse* 1.—"*Blessed.*" Here the Lord, who in the last day will pronounce some to be blessed and some to be cursed, doth now tell us who they are. What can comfort them to whom the Lord shall say, Depart from me, ye cursed? Where away shall they go when the Lord shall command them to depart from him? And what greater joy can come to a man, than to hear the Judge of all saying unto him, Come to me, ye blessed? Oh that we were wise in time, to think of this, that so we might endeavour to become such men as God in his word hath blessed!—*William Cowper*, 1566—1619.

*Verse* 1.—The Scripture speaketh of blessedness two ways; *causally*, in reference to that which is the cause whereby we get a right to this blessed estate; and in this sense it is attributed to faith in Christ, to forgiveness of sin, and to justification of life which we obtain in Christ. Sometimes the Scripture speaketh *formally* of blessedness, in order to the actual execution of it; and thus it pronounceth them blessed who are perfect in their course; for this is a blessedness actually executed, and doth fit us to have the full execution and consummation of blessedness begun in us; thus they are

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blessed who endure patiently, who are poor in spirit, who are merciful, who are peacemakers, etc. If I speak of a sick man, and say he is happy, for he hath met with a good physician; here I pronounce him blessed because he hath found one who will restore him to health. If I say of the same man, he is a happy man, he can now digest very well what he eateth, he can sleep, and walk abroad; I speak of him now as actually blessed with health of body.

The end of everything being the good of that thing, and the prosperity of everything being the end of it,—to attain in some latitude this perfection of action must needs make a man actually blessed. Hence blessedness is ascribed to *walking* in God's way. If we have not the habit of doing anything, we do it with difficulty, we are ready to cease from doing it; as a horse will continually break out of the pace to which he is not perfectly broken. Thence it is that the saints find their estate miserable till they form the habit which maketh them with facility and constancy *walk* with God; there being no greater misery than to see themselves doing good duties uncheerfully, no sooner entering them than out again, and desisting from them. On the contrary, they count it of all things most blessed to have attained some degree of permanent habit in godliness. The blessedness which is here spoken of is the actual execution of that blessedness which comes to us by faith in Christ.—*Paul Bayne*, —1617.

*Verse* 1.—"*The undefiled.*" You ask, Why does God will that we be undefiled? I reply, because he has chosen us for himself, for servants, for spouses, for temples. These three privileges or names mean that all defilement must be shunned by us.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse* 1.—"*Undefiled in the way.*" In the 1st Psalm it was, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly;" but who could think to walk in that way, and not have his feet soiled? "Who could go upon hot coals and his feet be not burned?" Here, however, the caution is, to take heed not to get any soil or defilement "*in the way*,"—in the Lord's way. Oh! what an insight does this give us of the pit-falls and snares that beset us in the road, and of the plague and evil of our own hearts, that even in the midst of holy things, somewhat of stain, or spot, or wrinkle will stick to us!—*Barton Bouchier*, 1856.

*Verse* 1.—"*The undefiled in the way.*" How can our feet be undefiled? How can our garments be unsoiled? We cannot guide ourselves. Unaided, we stumble into sloughs of defilement. But all help is near. Jesus is at hand to keep us by his mighty power. Let us lean on his supporting arm at every step, and when we fall let us rise and wash our robes in his all-cleansing blood. So may we ever be among "*the undefiled in the way;*" and let the law of the Lord, lovely in purity, glorious in holiness, perfect in love, be the path in which our feet advance. Jesus is our model and our all. God's law was in his heart.—*Henry Law, in "Family Devotion,"* 1878.

*Verse* 1.—"*In the way.*" They are blessed who are in *the* way, not *a* way, any chance or uncertain road, but "the King's Highway"; that path which the Lord himself has declared to us, saying, "I am the way."—*Hilary and Theodoret, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 1.—"*The way.*" There is much ado now about the way: many say, "Which is the way?" Some say, "This"; some, "That." Would you not mistake, inquire for "the old way, the way of holiness," and follow it, and thou shalt not perish. Some would go a new way; some a shorter, some an easier way. Do you go the holy way.—*John Sheffield* (*about* 1660), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

*Verse* 1.—"*Who walk.*" In this way there must be no standing, sitting, or reclining, but *walking*, so that all our movements may be regular, going on unto perfection: Matt. v. 48; 1 Cor. xiv. 20; James i. 4; Heb. vi. 1.—*Martin Geier*, 1614—1681.

*Verse* 1.—"*Who walk in the law of the* LORD." To go on with liberty in

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good duties is a point of blessed perfection. He is not truly able to *walk* who can only go twice or thrice about his chamber, or stir himself on some plain ground for a quarter of an hour; but he which can go strongly and freely up a hill in ways craggy and uneven: so Christians who can go while God maketh their way inoffensive, putting everything away which might hinder, but presently give over if ought disturbeth, they are not come to this free walking in which standeth a traveller's perfection. Look at those who are fat at heart, pursey (as we say), or have inward lameness, and ache of joints, or have caught a thorn from without, so that they are forced to lie by, and cannot walk; or those whose limbs are so feeble, that they cannot trip upon anything, but down they come;—all these lame folk do esteem other travellers to be happy who are able to exercise themselves in walking at will. Thus, when Christians find themselves hindered, and wearied, and stumbling, they deem others blessed who can go on constantly in their holy course, through good report and evil report, in want, in abundance, in every estate and condition. Wherefore, let us strive after this blessed walking.—*Paul Bayne.*

*Verse* 1.—"*Who walk in the law of the* LORD." Who walk towards heaven in heaven's way, avoiding the corruptions that are in the world through lust.—*John Trapp*, 1601—1669.

*Verse* 2.—The doubling of the sentence, "*Blessed*," "*Blessed*," in the first verse and second, is to let us see the certainty of the blessing belonging to the godly. The word of God is as true in itself when it is once spoken, as when it is many times repeated: the repetition of it is for confirmation of our weak faith. That which Isaac spake of Jacob,—"I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed," is the most sure decree of God upon all his children. Satan would fain curse Israel, by the mouth of such as Balaam was; but he shall not be able to curse, because God hath blessed.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.*" In the former verse a blessed man is described by the course of his actions, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way": in this verse he is described by the frame of his heart.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Keep his testimonies.*" The careful keeping in mind of God's testimonies is blessedness; for though there is a keeping of them in conversation mentioned in the former verse, here another thing is intimated diverse from the former; he that keepeth this plant or holy seed so that the devil cannot take it out of his heart, he is happy. The word here used signifieth such a careful custody as that is wherewith we use to keep tender plants.—*Paul Bayne.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Testimonies.*" The notion by which the word of God is expressed is "*testimonies*"; whereby is intended the whole declaration of God's will, in doctrines, commands, examples, threatenings, promises. The whole word is the testimony which God hath deposed for the satisfaction of the world about the way of their salvation. Now because the word of God brancheth itself into two parts, the law and the gospel, this notion may be applied to both. First, to *the law*, in regard whereof the ark was called "the ark of the testimony" (Exod. xxv. 16), because the two tables were laid up in it. *The gospel* is also called the testimony, "the testimony of God concerning his Son." "To the law, and to the testimony" (Isai. viii. 20); where testimony seems to be distinguished from the law. The gospel is so called, because therein God hath testified how a man shall be pardoned, reconciled to God, and obtain a right to eternal life. We need a testimony in this case, because it is more unknown to us. The law was written upon the heart, but the gospel is a stranger. Natural light will discern something of the law, and pry into matters which are of a moral strain and concernment; but evangelical truths are a mystery, and depend upon the mere testimony of God concerning his Son.—*Thomas Manton.*

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*Verse* 2.—"*Testimonies.*" The word of God is called his testimony, not only because it testifies his will concerning his service, but also his favour and goodwill concerning his own in Christ Jesus. If God's word were no more than a law, yet were we bound to obey it, because we are his creatures; but since it is also a testimony of his love, wherein as a father he witnesseth his favour towards his children, we are doubly inexcusable if we do not most joyfully embrace it.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Blessed are they . . . . that seek him with the whole heart.*" He pronounces "*blessed*" not such as are wise in their own conceit, or assume a sort of fantastical holiness, but those who dedicate themselves to the covenant of God, and yield obedience to the dictates of his law. Farther, by these words, he tells us that God is by no means satisfied with mere external service, for he demands the sincere and honest affection of the heart. And assuredly, if God be the sole Judge and Disposer of our life, the truth must occupy the principal place in our heart, because it is not sufficient to have our hands and feet only enlisted in his service.—*John Calvin*, 1509—1564.

*Verse* 2.—"*The whole heart.*" Whosoever would have sound happiness must have a sound heart. So much sincerity as there is, so much blessedness there will be; and according to the degree of our hypocrisy, will be the measure of our misery.—*Richard Greenham*, 1531—1591.

*Verses* 2, 3.—Observe the verbs *seek*, *do*, *walk*, all making up the subject to whom the blessedness belongs.—*Henry Hammond*, 1605—1660.

*Verse* 3.—"*They also do no iniquity.*" If it be demanded here, How is it that they who walk in God's ways work no iniquity? Is there any man who lives, and sins not? And if they be not without sin, how then are they to be blessed? The answer is, as the apostle says of our knowledge, "We know but in part": so is it true of our felicity on earth, we are blessed but in a part. It is the happiness of angels that they never sinned; it is the happiness of triumphant saints, that albeit they have been sinners, yet now they sin no more; but the happiness of saints militant is, that our sins are forgiven us; and that albeit sin remains in us, yet it reigns not over us; it is done in us, but not by our allowance: "I do the evil which I would not." "Not I, but sin that dwells in me," Rom. vii. 17.

To the *doing of iniquity*, these three things must concur; first, a purpose to do it; next, a delight in doing it; thirdly, a continuance in it; which three in God's children never concur; for in sins done in them by the old man, the new man makes his exceptions and protestations against them. It is not I, says he; and so far is he from delighting in them, that rather his soul is grieved with them; even as Lot, dwelling among the Sodomites, was vexed by hearing and seeing their unrighteous deeds. In a word, the children of God are rather sufferers of sin against their wills than actors of it with their wills: like men spiritually oppressed by the power of their enemy; for which they sigh and cry unto God. "Miserable man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And in this sense it is that the apostle saith, "He who is born of God sinneth not" (1 John iii. 9).—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 3.—"*They also do no iniquity.*" The blessedness of those who walk in the law: they do—or have done—no wickedness: but walk—or have always walked—in his ways. Throughout the psalm it may be noticed that sometimes the present tense is employed indicating present action: sometimes the perfect to indicate past and present time: verses 10, 11, 13, 14, 21, 51—61, 101, 102, 131, 145, 147.—*The Speaker's Commentary*, 1873.

*Verse* 3.—"*They also do no iniquity.*" That is, they make not a trade and common practice thereof. Slip they do, through the infirmity of the flesh, and subtlety of Satan, and the allurements of the world; but they do not ordinarily and customably go forward in unlawful and sinful courses.

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In that the Psalmist setteth down this as a part (and not the least part neither) of blessedness, *that they work none iniquity, which walk in his ways:* the doctrine to be learned here is this, that it is a marvellous great prerogative to be freed from the bondage of sin.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 3.—"*They do no iniquity.*" All such as are renewed by grace, and reconciled to God by Christ Jesus; to these God imputeth no sin to condemnation, and in his account *they do no iniquity.* Notable is that which is said of David, "He kept my commandments, and followed me with all his heart, and did that only which was right in mine eyes" (1 Kings xiv. 8). How can that be? We may trace David by his failings, they are upon record everywhere in the word; yet here a veil is drawn upon them; God laid them not to his charge. There is a double reason why their failings are not laid to their charge. *Partly, because of their general state,* they are in Christ, taken into favour through him, and "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ" (Rom. viii. 1), therefore particular errors and escapes do not alter their condition; which is not to be understood as if a man should not be humbled, and ask God pardon for his infirmities; no, for then they prove iniquities and they will lie upon record against him. It was a gross fancy of the Valentinians, who held that they were not defiled with sin, whatsoever they committed; though base and obscene persons, yet still they were as gold in the dirt. No, no, we are to recover ourselves by repentance, to sue out the favour of God. When David humbled himself, and had repented, then saith Nathan, "The Lord hath put away thy sin" (2 Sam. xii. 13). *Partly, too, because their bent and habitual inclination is to do otherwise.* They set themselves to comply with God's will, to seek and serve the Lord, though they are clogged with many infirmities. A wicked man sinneth with deliberation and delight, his bent is to do evil, he makes "provision for lusts" (Rom. xiii. 14), and "serves" them by a voluntary subjection (Titus iii. 3). But those that are renewed by grace are not "debtors" to the flesh, they have taken another debt and obligation, which is to serve the Lord (Rom. viii. 12).

*Partly, too, because their general course and way is to do otherwise.* Everything works according to its form; the constant actions of nature are according to the kind. So the new creature, his constant operations are according to grace. A man is known by his custom, and the course of his endeavours shows what is his business. If a man be constantly, easily, frequently carried away to sin, it discovers the habit of his soul, and the temper of his heart. Meadows may be overflowed, but marsh ground is drowned with every return of the tide. A child of God may be occasionally carried away, and act contrary to the inclination of the new nature; but when men are drowned and overcome by the return of every temptation, it argues a habit of sin.

*And partly, because sin never carries sway completely, but it is opposed by dislikes and resistances of the new nature.* The children of God make it their business to avoid all sin, by watching, praying, mortifying: "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue" (Ps. xxxix. 1), and thus there is a resistance of the sin. God hath planted graces in their hearts, the fear of his Majesty, that works a resistance; and therefore there is not a full allowance of what they do. This resistance sometimes is more strong, then the temptation is overcome: "How can I do this wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9). Sometimes it is more weak, and then sin carries it, though against the will of the holy man: "The evil which I hate, that do I" (Rom. vii. 15, 18). It is the evil which they hate; they protest against it; they are like men which are oppressed by the power of the enemy. And then there is a remorse after the sin: David's heart smote him. It grieves and shames them that they do evil. Tenderness goes with the new nature: Peter sinned foully, but he went out and wept bitterly.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 3.—They that have mortified their sins live in the contrary graces.

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Hence it is that the psalmist saith, that "*they work no iniquity, but walk in thy paths.*" First, they crucify all their sins, "*they do no iniquity*": secondly, as they do no iniquity, so they follow all the ways of God, contrary to that iniquity: as they *give up all* the ways of sin, so they *take up all* the ways of grace. It is a rule in divinity, that *grace takes not away nature;* that is, grace comes not to take away a man's affections, but to take them up.—*William Fenner*, 1600—1640.

*Verse* 3.—"*They walk in his ways.*" It reproves those that rest in negatives. As it was said of a certain emperor, he was rather *not vicious* than virtuous. Many men, all their religion runs upon *nots:* "I am *not* as this publican" (Luke xviii. 11). That ground is naught, though it brings not forth briars and thorns, if it yields not good increase. Not only the unruly servant is cast into hell, that beat his fellow-servant, that ate and drank with the drunken; but the idle servant that wrapped up his talent in a napkin. Meroz is cursed, not for opposing and fighting, but for not helping (Judges v. 23). Dives did not take away food from Lazarus, but he did not give him of his crumbs. Many will say, I set up no other gods; ay, but dost thou love, reverence, and obey the true God? For if not, thou dost fail in the first commandment. As to the second, thou sayest, I abhor idols; but dost thou delight in ordinances? I do not swear and rend the name of God by cursed oaths; ay, but dost thou glorify God, and honour him? I do not profane the Sabbath; but dost thou sanctify it? Thou dost not plough and dance; but thou art idle, and toyest away the Sabbath. Thou dost not wrong thy parents; but dost thou reverence them? Thou dost not murder; but dost thou do good to thy neighbour? Thou art no adulterer; but dost thou study temperance and a holy sobriety in all things? Thou art no slanderer; but art thou tender of thy neighbour's honour and credit, as of thy own? Usually men cut off half their bill, as the unjust steward bade his lord's debtor set down fifty when he owed a hundred. We do not think of sins of omission. If we are not drunkards, adulterers, and profane persons, we do not think what it is to omit respect to God, and reverence for his holy Majesty.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 3.—"*They walk in* his *ways.*" Not in those of his enemies, nor even in their own.—*Joseph Addison Alexander*, —1860.

*Verse* 3.—"*They walk in* his *ways.*" Habitually, constantly, characteristically. They are not *merely* honest, upright, and just in their dealings with men; but they walk in the ways of God; they are *religious.*—*Albert Barnes*, 1798—1870.

*Verse* 4.—"*Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.*" It is not a matter ἀδιάφορος, and left to the discretion of men, either to hear, or to neglect sacred discourses, theological readings, and expositions of the Sacred Book; but God has commanded, and not commanded cursorily when speaking of another matter, but מְאֹד, earnestly and greatly he has commanded us to keep his precepts. There should be infixed in our mind the words found in Deut. vi. 6, "*My words shall be in thy heart:*" in Matt. xvii., "*Hear ye him:*" in John v., "*Search the Scriptures.*" Above all things, students of theology should remember the Pauline rule in 1 Tim. iii., "*Give attention to reading.*"—*Solomon Gesner.*

*Verse* 4.—"*Thou hast commanded us,*" etc. Hath God enjoined us to observe his precepts so exceedingly carefully and diligently? Then let nothing draw us therefrom, no, not in the least circumstance; let us esteem nothing needless, frivolous, or superfluous, that we have a warrant for out of his word; nor count those too wise or precise that will stand resolutely upon the same: if the Lord require anything, though the world should gainsay it, and we be derided and abused for the doing of it, yet let us proceed still in the course of our obedience.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 4.—"*Diligently.*" For three causes should we keep the commandments

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of the Lord with diligence: first, because our adversary that seeks to snare us by the transgression of them is diligent in tempting, for he goes about, night and day, seeking to devour us; next, because we ourselves are weak and infirm, by the greater diligence have we need to take heed to ourselves; thirdly, because of the great loss we sustain by every vantage Satan gets over us; for we find by experience, that as a wound is sooner made than it is healed, so guiltiness of conscience is easily contracted, but not so easily done away.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 4.—"*Diligently.*" In this verse he reminds the reader how well he knew that this study of the divine law must necessarily be severe, (earnest), since God has commanded that it should be observed diligently; that is, with the profoundest study; as that which alone is good, and as everything is good which it commands.—*Antonio Brucioli*, 1534.

*Verse* 4.—The word translated "*diligently*," doth signify in the original tongue *wonderful much*, so that the words go thus: "*Thou hast commanded to keep thy precepts wonderful much.*"—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verses* 4, 5.—"*Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently*," verse 4; this is God's imperative. "*O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*" verse 5; this should be our optative.—*Thomas Adams*, 1614.

*Verses* 4, 5.—It is very observable concerning David, that when he prayeth so earnestly, "*O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes*," he premiseth this as the reason, "*Thou hast commanded us to keep thy statutes diligently*," thereby intimating that the ground of his obedience to God's precepts was the stamp of divine authority enjoining him. To this purpose it is that he saith in this same psalm, ver. 94, "*I have sought thy precepts*," thereby implying that what he sought in his obedience was the fulfilling of God's will. Indeed, that only and properly is obedience which is done *intuitu voluntatis divinæ*, with a respect to and eye upon the divine will. As that is only a divine faith which believeth a truth, not because of human reason but divine revelation, so that only is a true obedience which conformeth to the command, not because it may consist with any selfish ends, but because it carrieth in it an impression of Christ's authority.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

*Verse* 5.—In tracing the connection of this verse with the preceding, we cannot forbear to remark how accurately the middle path is preserved, as keeping us at an equal distance from the idea of self-sufficiency to "*keep the Lord's statutes*," and self-justification in neglecting them. The first attempt to render spiritual obedience will quickly convince us of our utter helplessness. We might as soon create a world as create in our hearts one pulse of spiritual life. And yet our inability does not cancel our obligation. It is the weakness of a heart that "cannot be subject to the law of God," for no other reason than because it is "carnal," and therefore "enmity against God." Our inability is our sin, our guilt, our condemnation, and instead of excusing our condition, stops our mouth, and leaves us destitute of any plea of defence before God. Thus our obligation remains in full force. We are bound to obey the commands of God, whether we can or not. What, then, remains for us, but to return the mandate to heaven, accompanied with an earnest prayer, that the Lord would write upon our hearts those statutes to which he requires obedience in his word? "*Thou hast commanded us to keep thy statutes diligently.*" We acknowledge, Lord, our obligation, but we feel our impotency. Lord, help us; we look unto thee. "*O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.*"—*Charles Bridges*, 1849.

*Verse* 5.—"*O that*," etc. In the former verse the prophet David observes the charge which God gives, and that is, that his commandments be diligently kept: here, then, he observes his own weakness and insufficiency to discharge that great duty, and therefore, as one by the spirit desirous to discharge it, and yet by the flesh not able to discharge it, he breaketh out into these words, "*O that my ways were directed*," etc. Much like unto a child

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that being commanded to take up some great weight from the ground, is willing to do it, though not able to do it: or a sick patient advised to walk many turns in his chamber, finds a desire in his heart, though inability in his body to do that which he is directed unto.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 5.—"*O that my ways,*" etc. It is the use and duty of the people of God to turn precepts into prayers. That this is the practice of God's children appeareth: "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God" (Jer. xxxi. 18). God had said, "Turn you, and you shall live," and they ask it of God, "Turn us," as he required it of them. It was Austin's prayer, *Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis,* "Give what thou requirest, and require what thou wilt." It is the duty of the saints; for, 1st, *It suiteth with the Gospel-covenant,* where precepts and promises go hand in hand; where God giveth what he commandeth, and worketh all our works in us and for us. They are not conditions of the covenant only, but a part of it. What God hath required at our hands, that we may desire at his hands. God is no Pharaoh, to require brick where he giveth no straw. *Lex jubet, gracia juvat.* The articles of the new covenant are not only put into the form of precepts, but promises. The law giveth no strength to perform anything, but the Gospel offereth grace. 2ndly, Because, *by this means, the ends of God are fulfilled.* Why doth God require what we cannot perform by our own strength? He doth it, (1.) To keep up his right. (2.) To convince us of our impotency, and that, upon a trial, without his grace we cannot do his work. (3.) That the creature may express his readiness to obey. (4.) To bring us to lie at his feet for grace.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 5.—"*O that,*" etc. The whole life of a good Christian is *an holy desire,* saith Augustine; and this is always seconded with endeavour, without the which, affection is like Rachel, beautiful, but barren.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 5.—"*O that my ways were directed,*" etc. The original word כּוֹן, *kun,* is sometimes rendered to *establish,* and, accordingly, it may seem as if the prophet were soliciting for himself the virtue of perseverance. I am rather inclined to understand it as signifying *to direct;* for, although God is plainly instructing us in his law, the obtuseness of our understanding and the perversity of our hearts constantly need the direction of his Spirit.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 6.—"*Then shall I not be ashamed.*" No one likes *to be ashamed* or *to blush:* therefore all things which bring shame after them must be avoided: Ezra ix. 6; Jer. iii. 25; Dan. ix. 7, 9. As the workman keeps his eye fixed on his pattern, and the scholar on the copy of his writing-master; so the godly man ever and anon turns his eyes to the word of his God.—*Martin Geier.*

*Verse* 6.—There is a twofold shame; the shame of a guilty conscience; and the shame of a tender conscience. The one is the merit and fruit of sin; the other is an act of grace. This which is here spoken of is to be understood not of a holy self-loathing, but a confounding shame.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 6.—"*Then shall I not be ashamed,*" etc. Then shall I have confidence both towards God and man, and mine own soul, when I can pronounce of myself that my obedience is impartial, and uniform, and universal, no secret sin reserved for my favour, no least commandment knowingly or willingly neglected by me.—*Henry Hammond.*

*Verse* 6.—"*Then shall I not be ashamed,*" etc. You ask, Why is he not ashamed who has "*respect unto all the commandments of God*"? I answer, the sense is, as if he had said, The commandments of God are so pure and excellent, that though thou shouldest regard the whole and each one of them most attentively, thou wouldest not find anything that would cause thee to blush. The laws of Lycurgus are praised; but they permitted theft. The statutes of Plato are praised; but they commended the community of

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wives. "*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul:*" Ps. xix. 7. It is a mirror, reflecting the beautiful light of the stars on him who looks into it.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse* 6.—The blessing here spoken of is freedom from shame in looking unto *all* the commandments. If God hear prayer, and establish the soul in this habit of keeping the commandments, there will be yet this further blessing of being able to look unto every precept without shame. Many men can look at *some* commandments without shame. Turning to the ten commandments, the honest man feels no shame as he gazes on the eighth, the pure man is free from reproach as he reads the seventh, he who is reverent and hates blasphemy is not rebuked by the thought that he has violated the third, while the filial spirit rather delights in than shuns the fifth. So on with the remainder. Most men perhaps can look at some of the precepts with comparative freedom from reproof. But who can so look unto them all? Yet this, also, the godly heart aspires to. In this verse we find the psalmist consciously anticipating the truth of a word in the New Testament: "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all."—*Frederick G. Marchant.*

*Verse* 6.—"*Ashamed.*"

I can bear scorpion's stings, tread fields of fire,
In frozen gulfs of cold eternal lie;
Be toss'd aloft through tracts of endless void,
But cannot live in shame. —*Joanna Baillie*, 1762—1851.

*Verse* 6.—"*When I have respect unto all thy commandments.*" Literally, "In my looking at all thy commandments." That is, in his regarding them; in his feeling that all were equally binding on him; and in his having the consciousness that he had not intentionally neglected, violated, or disregarded any of them. There can be no true piety except where a man *intends* to keep ALL the commands of God. If he makes a selection among them, keeping this one or that one, as may be most convenient for him, or as may be most for his interest, or as may be most popular, it is full proof that he knows nothing of the nature of true religion. A child has no proper respect for a parent if he obeys him only as shall suit his whim or his convenience; and no man *can* be a pious man who does not purpose, in all honesty, to keep ALL the commandments of God; to submit to his will *in everything.*—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 6.—"*All thy commandments.*" There is the same reason for obedience to one command as another,—God's authority, who is the Lawgiver (James ii. 11); and therefore when men choose one duty and overlook others, they do not so much obey the will of God, as gratify their own humours and fancies, pleasing him only so far as they can please themselves too; and this is not reasonable; we never yield him a "reasonable service," but when it is universal.—*Edward Veal* (1632—1708), *in* "*The Morning Exercises.*"

*Verse* 6.—"*All thy commandments.*" A partial obedience will never satisfy a child of God. The exclusion of any commandment from its supreme regard in the heart is the brand of hypocrisy. Even Herod could "do many things," and yet one evil way cherished, and therefore unforsaken, was sufficient to show the sovereign power of sin undisturbed within. Saul slew all the Amalekites but one; and that single exception in the path of universal obedience marked the unsoundness of his profession, cost him the loss of his throne, and brought him under the awful displeasure of his God. And thus the foot, or the hand, or the right eye, the corrupt unmortified members, bring the whole body to hell. Reserves are the canker of Christian sincerity.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 6.—"*Unto all thy commandments.*" *Allow* that *any* of God's commandments *may* be transgressed, and we shall soon have the whole decalogue set aside.—*Adam Clarke*, 1760—1832.

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*Verse* 6.—Many will do some good, but are defective in other things, and usually in those which are most necessary. They cull out the easiest and cheapest parts of religion, such as do not contradict their lusts and interests. We can never have sound peace till we regard all. "*Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments.*" Shame is fear of a just reproof. This reproof is either from the supreme or the deputy judge. The supreme judge of all our actions is God. This should be our principal care, that we may not be ashamed before him at his coming, nor disapproved in the judgment. But there is a deputy judge which every man has in his own bosom. Our consciences do acquit or condemn us as we are partial or sincere in our duty to God, and much dependeth on that. 1 John iii. 20, 21, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." Well, then, that our hearts may not reprove or reproach us, we should be complete in all the will of God. Alas, otherwise you will never have evidence of your sincerity. —*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 6.—Such is the mercy of God in Christ to his children, that he accepts their weak endeavours, joined with sincerity and perseverance in his service, as if they were a full obedience. . . . O, who would not serve such a Lord? You hear servants sometimes complain of their masters as so rigid and strict, that they can never please them; no, not when they do their utmost: but this cannot be charged upon God. Be but so faithful as to do thy best, and God is so gracious that he will pardon thy worst. David, knew this gospel indulgence when he said, "*Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments,*" when my eye is to all thy commandments. The traveller hath his eye on or towards the place he is going to, though he be as yet short of it; there he would be, and he is putting on all he can to reach it: so stands the saint's heart to all the commands of God; he presseth on to come nearer and nearer to full obedience; such a soul shall never be put to shame.—*William Gurnall*, 1617—1679.

*Verse* 7.—"*I will praise thee . . . . when I shall have learned,*" etc. There is no way to please God entirely and sincerely until we have learned both to know and do his will. Practical praise is the praise God looks after.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 7.—"*I will praise thee.*" What is the matter for which he praises God? It is that he has been taught something of him and by him amongst men. To have learned any tongue, or science, from some school of philosophy, bindeth us to our alma mater. We praise those who can teach a dog, a horse, this or that; but for us ass-colts to learn the will of God, how to walk pleasing before him, this should be acknowledged of us as a great mercy from God.—*Paul Bayne.*

*Verse* 7.—"*Praise thee . . . when I shall have learned,*" etc. But when doth David say that he will be thankful? Even when God shall teach him. Both the matter and the grace of thankfulness are from God. As he did with Abraham, he commanded him to worship by sacrifice, and at the same time gave him the sacrifice: so doth he with all his children; for he gives not only good things, for which they should thank him, but in like manner grace by which they are able to thank him.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 7.—"*When I shall have learned.*" By learning he means his attaining not only to the knowledge of the word, but the practice of it. It is not a speculative light, or a bare notion of things: "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John vi. 45). It is such a learning as the effect will necessarily follow, such a light and illumination as doth convert the soul, and frame our hearts and ways according to the will of God. For otherwise, if we get understanding of the word, nay, if we get it imprinted in our memories, it will do us no good

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without practice. The best of God's servants are but scholars and students in the knowledge and obedience of his word. For saith David, "*When I shall have learned.*" The professors of the Christian religion were primitively called disciples or learners: Τὸ πλῆθος τῶν μαθητῶν, "the multitude of the disciples" (Acts vi. 2.)—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 7.—"*Learned thy righteous judgments.*" We see here what David especially desired to learn, namely, the word and will of God: he would ever be a scholar in this school, and sought daily to ascend to the highest form; that learning to know, he might remember; remembering, might believe; believing, might delight; delighting might admire; admiring, might adore; adoring, might practise; and practising, might continue in the way of God's statutes. This learning is the old and true learning indeed, and he is best learned in this art, who turneth God's word into good works.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 7.—"*Judgments of thy righteousness*" are the decisions concerning right and wrong which give expression to and put in execution the righteousness of God.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

*Verse* 8.—This verse, being the last of this portion, is the result of his meditation concerning the utility and necessity of the keeping the law of God. Here take notice:—I. Of his resolution, "*I will keep thy statutes.*" II. Of his prayer, "*O forsake me not utterly.*" It is his purpose to keep the law; yet because he is conscious to himself of many infirmities, he prays against desertion. In the prayer more is intended than is expressed. "*O forsake me not*"; he means, strengthen me in this work; and if thou shouldst desert me, yet but for a while, Lord, not for ever; if in part, not in whole. Four points we may observe hence:—1. That it is a great advantage to come to a resolution as to a course of godliness. 2. Those that resolve upon a course of obedience have need to fly to God's help. 3. Though we fly to God's help, yet sometimes God may withdraw, and seem to forsake us. 4. Though God seem to forsake us, and really doth so in part; yet we should pray that it may not be a total and utter desertion.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 8 *with* 7.—"*I will keep thy statutes,*" etc. The resolution to "*keep the Lord's statutes*" is the natural result of having "*learned his righteous judgments.*" And on this point David illustrates the inseparable and happy union of "simplicity" of dependence, and "godly sincerity" of obedience. Instantly upon forming his resolution, he recollects that the performance of it is beyond the power of human strength, and therefore the next moment he follows it with prayer: "*I will keep thy statutes; O forsake me not utterly.*"—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 8.—"*I will.*" David setteth a personal example of holiness. If the king of Israel keep God's statutes, the people of Israel will be ashamed to neglect them. Cæsar was wont to say, Princes must not say, *Ite*, go ye, without me; but, *Venite*, come ye, along with me. So said Gideon (Jud. v. 17): "As ye see me do, so do ye."—*R. Greenham.*

*Verse* 8.—"*Forsake me not utterly.*" There is a total and a partial desertion. Those who are bent to obey God may for a while, and in some degree, be left to themselves. We cannot promise ourselves an utter immunity from desertion; but it is not total. We shall find for his great name's sake, "The Lord will not forsake his people" (1 Sam. xii. 22), and, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. xiii. 5). Not utterly, yet in part they may be forsaken. Elijah was forsaken, but not as Ahab: Peter was forsaken in part, but not as Judas, who was utterly forsaken, and made a prey to the Devil. David was forsaken to be humbled and bettered; but Saul was forsaken utterly to be destroyed. Saith Theophylact, God may forsake his people so as to shut out their prayers, (Ps. lxxx. 4), so as to interrupt the peace and joy of their heart, and abate their strength, so that their spiritual life may be much at a stand, and sin may break out, and

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they may fall foully; but they are not *utterly* forsaken. One way or other, God is still present; present in light sometimes when he is not present in strength, when he manifests the evil of their present condition, so as to make them mourn under it; and present in awakening their desires, though not in giving them enjoyment. As long as there is any esteem of God, he is not yet gone; there is some light and love yet left, manifested by our desires of communion with him.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 8.—"*Forsake me not utterly.*" The desertions of God's elect are first of all *partial*, that is, such as wherein God doth not wholly forsake them, but in some part. Secondly, *temporary*, that is, for some space of time, and never beyond the compass of this present life. "For a moment (saith the Lord in Esay) in mine anger I hid my face from thee for a little season, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." And to this purpose David, well acquainted with this matter, prayeth, "*Forsake me not overlong.*" This sort of desertions, though it be but for a time, yet no part of a Christian man's life is free from them; and very often taking deep place in the heart of man, they are of long continuance. David continued in his dangerous fall about the space of a whole year before he was recovered. Luther confesseth of himself, that, after his conversion, he lay three years in desperation. Common observation in such like cases hath made record of even longer times of spiritual forsakings.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 8.—"*O forsake me not utterly.*" This prayer reads like the startled cry of one who was half afraid that he had been presumptuous in expressing the foregoing resolve. He desired to keep the divine statutes, and like Peter he vowed that he would do so; but remembering his own weakness, he recoils from his own venturesomeness, and feels that he must pray. I have made a solemn vow, but what if I have uttered it in my own strength? What if God should leave me to myself? He is filled with terror at the thought. He breaks out with an "O." He implores and beseeches the Lord not to test him by leaving him even for an instant entirely to himself. To be forsaken of God is the worst ill that the most melancholy saint ever dreams of. Thank God, it will never fall to our lot; for no promise can be more express than that which saith, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This promise does not prevent our praying, but excites us to it. Because God will not forsake his own, therefore do we cry to him in the agony of our feebleness, "O forsake me not utterly."—*C. H. S.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 9 TO 16.

WHEREWITHAL shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.

10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

12 Blessed *art* thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

13 With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as *much as* in all riches.

15 I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

16 I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

9. "*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?*" How shall he become and remain practically holy? He is but a young man, full of hot passions, and poor in knowledge and experience; how shall he get right, and keep right? Never was there a more important question for any man; never was there a fitter time for asking it than at the commencement of life. It is by no means an easy task which the prudent young man sets before him. He wishes to choose a clean way, to be himself clean in it, to cleanse it of any foulness which may arise in the future, and to end by showing a clear course from the first step to the last; but, alas, his way is already unclean by actual sin which he has already committed, and he himself has within his nature a tendency towards that which defileth. Here, then, is the difficulty, first of beginning aright, next of being always able to know and choose the right, and of continuing in the right till perfection is ultimately reached: this is hard for any man, how shall a youth accomplish it? The way, or life, of the man has to be cleansed from the sins of his youth behind him, and kept clear of the sins which temptation will place before him: this is the work, this is the difficulty.

No nobler ambition can lie before a youth, none to which he is called by so sure a calling; but none in which greater difficulties can be found. Let him not, however, shrink from the glorious enterprise of living a pure and gracious life; rather let him enquire the way by which all obstacles may be overcome. Let him not think that he knows the road to easy victory, nor dream that he can keep himself by his own wisdom; he will do well to follow the psalmist, and become an earnest enquirer asking how he may cleanse his way. Let him become a practical disciple of the holy God, who alone can teach him how to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, that trinity of defilers by whom many a hopeful life has been spoiled. He is young and unaccustomed to the road, let him not be ashamed often to enquire his way of him who is so ready and so able to instruct him in it.

Our "*way*" is a subject which concerns us deeply, and it is far better to enquire about it than to speculate upon mysterious themes which rather puzzle than enlighten the mind. Among all the questions which a young man asks, and they are many, let this be the first and chief: "Wherewithal shall I cleanse my way?" This is a question suggested by common sense, and pressed home by daily occurrences; but it is not to be answered by unaided reason, nor, when answered, can the directions be

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carried out by unsupported human power. It is ours to ask the question, it is God's to give the answer and enable us to carry it out.

"*By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*" Young man, the Bible must be your chart, and you must exercise great watchfulness that your way may be according to its directions. You must take heed to your daily life as well as study your Bible, and you must study your Bible that you may take heed to your daily life. With the greatest care a man will go astray if his map misleads him; but with the most accurate map he will still lose his road if he does not take heed to it. The narrow way was never hit upon by chance, neither did any heedless man ever lead a holy life. We can sin without thought, we have only to neglect the great salvation and ruin our souls; but to obey the Lord and walk uprightly will need all our heart and soul and mind. Let the careless remember this.

Yet the "*word*" is absolutely necessary; for, otherwise, care will darken into morbid anxiety, and conscientiousness may become superstition. A captain may watch from his deck all night; but if he knows nothing of the coast, and has no pilot on board, he may be carefully hastening on to shipwreck. It is not enough to desire to be right; for ignorance may make us think that we are doing God service when we are provoking him, and the fact of our ignorance will not reverse the character of our action, however much it may mitigate its criminality. Should a man carefully measure out what he believes to be a dose of useful medicine, he will die if it should turn out that he has taken up the wrong vial, and has poured out a deadly poison: the fact that he did it ignorantly will not alter the result. Even so, a young man may surround himself with ten thousand ills, by carefully using an unenlightened judgment, and refusing to receive instruction from the word of God. Wilful ignorance is in itself wilful sin, and the evil which comes of it is without excuse. Let each man, whether young or old, who desires to be holy have a holy watchfulness in his heart, and keep his Holy Bible before his open eye. There he will find every turn of the road marked down, every slough and miry place pointed out, with the way to go through unsoiled; and there, too, he will find light for his darkness, comfort for his weariness, and company for his loneliness, so that by its help he shall reach the benediction of the first verse of the psalm, which suggested the psalmist's enquiry, and awakened his desires.

Note how the first section of eight verses has for its first verse, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way," and the second section runs parallel to it, with the question, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" The blessedness which is set before us in a conditional promise should be practically sought for in the way appointed. The Lord saith, "For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

10. "*With my whole heart have I sought thee.*" His heart had gone after God himself: he had not only desired to obey his laws, but to commune with his person. This is a right royal search and pursuit, and well may it be followed with the whole heart. The surest mode of cleansing the way of our life is to seek after God himself, and to endeavour to abide in fellowship with him. Up to the good hour in which he was speaking to his Lord, the Psalmist had been an eager seeker after the Lord, and if faint, he was still pursuing. Had he not sought the Lord he would never have been so anxious to cleanse his way.

It is pleasant to see how the writer's heart turns distinctly and directly to God. He had been considering an important truth in the preceding verse, but here he so powerfully feels the presence of his God that he speaks to him, and prays to him as to one who is near. A true heart cannot long live without fellowship with God.

His petition is founded on his life's purpose: he is seeking the Lord, and he prays the Lord to prevent his going astray in or from his search. It is by obedience that we follow after God, hence the prayer, "*O let me not*



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*wander from thy commandments*"; for if we leave the ways of God's appointment we certainly shall not find the God who appointed them. The more a man's whole heart is set upon holiness the more does he dread falling into sin; he is not so much fearful of deliberate transgression as of inadvertent wandering: he cannot endure a wandering look, or a rambling thought, which might stray beyond the pale of the precept. We are to be such whole-hearted seekers that we have neither time nor will to be wanderers, and yet with all our whole-heartedness we are to cultivate a jealous fear lest even then we should wander from the path of holiness.

Two things may be very like and yet altogether different: saints are "strangers"—"I am a stranger in the earth" (verse 19), but they are not wanderers: they are passing through an enemy's country, but their route is direct; they are seeking their Lord while they traverse this foreign land. Their way is hidden from men; but yet they have not lost their way.

The man of God exerts himself, but does not trust himself: his heart is in his walking with God: but he knows that even his whole strength is not enough to keep him right unless his King shall be his keeper, and he who made the commands shall make him constant in obeying them: hence the prayer, "*O let me not wander.*" Still, this sense of need was never turned into an argument for idleness; for while he prayed to be kept in the right road he took care to run in it with his whole heart seeking the Lord.

It is curious again to note how the second part of the psalm keeps step with the first; for where verse 2 pronounces that man to be blessed who seeks the Lord with his whole heart, the present verse claims the blessing by pleading the character: "*With my whole heart have I sought thee.*"

11. When a godly man sues for a favour from God he should carefully use every means for obtaining it, and accordingly, as the Psalmist had asked to be preserved from wandering, he here shows us the holy precaution which he had taken to prevent his falling into sin. "*Thy word have I hid in mine heart.*" His heart would be kept by the word because he kept the word in his heart. All that he had of the word written, and all that had been revealed to him by the voice of God,—all, without exception, he had stored away in his affections, as a treasure to be preserved in a casket, or as a choice seed to be buried in a fruitful soil: what soil more fruitful than a renewed heart, wholly seeking the Lord? The word was God's own, and therefore precious to God's servant. He did not wear a text *on* his heart as a charm, but he hid it *in* his heart as a rule. He laid it up in the place of love and life, and it filled the chamber with sweetness and light. We must in this imitate David, copying his heart-work as well as his outward character. First, we must mind that what we believe is truly God's word; that being done, we must hide or treasure it each man for himself; and we must see that this is done, not as a mere feat of the memory, but as the joyful act of the affections.

"*That I might not sin against thee.*" Here was the object aimed at. As one has well said,—Here is the best thing—"thy word"; hidden in the best place,—"in my heart;" for the best of purposes,—"that I might not sin against thee." This was done by the Psalmist with personal care, as a man carefully hides away his money when he fears thieves,—in this case the thief dreaded was sin. Sinning "against God" is the believer's view of moral evil; other men care only when they offend against men. God's word is the best preventive against offending God, for it tells us his mind and will, and tends to bring our spirit into conformity with the divine Spirit. No cure for sin in the life is equal to the word in the seat of life, which is the heart. There is no hiding from sin unless we hide the truth in our souls.

A very pleasant variety of meaning is obtained by laying stress upon the words "thy" and "thee." He speaks to *God*, he loves the word because it is *God's* word, and he hates sin because it is sin against *God* himself. If

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he vexed others, he minded not so long as he did not offend his God. If we would not cause God displeasure we must treasure up his own word.

The personal way in which the man of God did this is also noteworthy: "With my whole heart have *I* sought thee." Whatever others might choose to do he had already made his choice and placed the Word in his innermost soul as his dearest delight, and however others might transgress, his aim was after holiness: "That *I* might not sin against thee." This was not what he purposed to do, but what he had already done: many are great at promising, but the Psalmist had been true in performing: hence he hoped to see a sure result. When the word is hidden in the heart the life shall be hidden from sin.

The parallelism between the second octave and the first is still continued. Verse 3 speaks of doing no iniquity, while this verse treats of the method of not sinning. When we form an idea of a blessedly holy man (verse 3) it becomes us to make an earnest effort to attain unto the same sacred innocence and divine happiness, and this can only be through heart-piety founded on the Scriptures.

12. "*Blessed art thou, O* LORD." These are words of adoration arising out of an intense admiration of the divine character, which the writer is humbly aiming to imitate. He blesses God for all that he has revealed to him, and wrought in him; he praises him with warmth of reverent love, and depth of holy wonder. These are also words of perception uttered from a remembrance of the great Jehovah's infinite happiness within himself. The Lord is and must be blessed, for he is the perfection of holiness; and this is probably the reason why this is used as a plea in this place. It is as if David had said—I see that in conformity to thyself my way to happiness must lie, for thou art supremely blessed; and if I am made in my measure like to thee in holiness, I shall also partake in thy blessedness.

No sooner is the word in the heart than a desire arises to mark and learn it. When food is eaten, the next thing is to digest it; and when the word is received into the soul, the first prayer is—Lord, teach me its meaning. "*Teach me thy statutes*"; for thus only can I learn the way to be blessed. Thou art so blessed that I am sure thou wilt delight in blessing others, and this boon I crave of thee that I may be instructed in thy commands. Happy men usually rejoice to make others happy, and surely the happy God will willingly impart the holiness which is the fountain of happiness. Faith prompted this prayer and based it, not upon anything in the praying man, but solely upon the perfection of the God to whom he made supplication. Lord, thou art blessed, therefore bless me by teaching me.

We need to be disciples or learners—"*teach me*;" but what an honour to have God himself for a teacher: how bold is David to beg the blessed God to teach him! Yet the Lord put the desire into his heart when the sacred word was hidden there, and so we may be sure that he was not too bold in expressing it. Who would not wish to enter the school of such a Master to learn of him the art of holy living? To this Instructor we must submit ourselves if we would practically keep the statutes of righteousness. The King who ordained the statutes knows best their meaning, and as they are the outcome of his own nature he can best inspire us with their spirit. The petition commends itself to all who wish to cleanse their way, since it is most practical, and asks for teaching, not upon recondite lore, but upon statute law. If we know the Lord's statutes we have the most essential education.

Let us each one say, "*Teach me thy statutes.*" This is a sweet prayer for everyday use. It is a step above that of verse 10, "O let me not wander," as that was a rise beyond that of 8, "O forsake me not utterly." It finds its answer in verses 98—100: "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies," etc.: but not till it had been repeated even to the third time in the "Teach me" of verses 33 and 66, all of which I

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beg my reader to peruse. Even after this third pleading the prayer occurs again in so many words in verses 124 and 139, and the same longing comes out near the close of the psalm in verse 171—"My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me thy statutes."

13. "*With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.*" The taught one of verse 12 is here a teacher himself. What we learn in secret we are to proclaim upon the housetops. So had the Psalmist done. As much as he had known he had spoken. God has revealed many of his judgments by his mouth, that is to say, by a plain and open revelation; these it is out duty to repeat, becoming, as it were, so many exact echoes of his one infallible voice. There are judgments of God which are a great deep, which he does not reveal, and with these it will be wise for us not to intermeddle. What the Lord has veiled it would be presumption for us to uncover; but, on the other hand, what the Lord has revealed it would be shameful for us to conceal. It is a great comfort to a Christian in time of trouble when in looking back upon his past life he can claim to have done his duty by the word of God. To have been, like Noah, a preacher of righteousness, is a great joy when the floods are rising, and the ungodly world is about to be destroyed. Lips which have been used in proclaiming God's statutes are sure to be acceptable when pleading God's promises. If we have had such regard to that which cometh out of God's mouth that we have published it far and wide, we may rest quite assured that God will have respect unto the prayers which come out of our mouths.

It will be an effectual method of cleansing a young man's way if he addicts himself continually to preaching the gospel. He cannot go far wrong in judgment whose whole soul is occupied in setting forth the judgments of the Lord. By teaching we learn; by training the tongue to holy speech we master the whole body; by familiarity with the divine procedure we are made to delight in righteousness; and thus in a threefold manner our way is cleansed by our proclaiming the way of the Lord.

14. "*I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies.*" Delight in the word of God is a sure proof that it has taken effect upon the heart, and so is cleansing the life. The Psalmist not only says that he does rejoice, but that he has rejoiced. For years it had been his joy and bliss to give his soul to the teaching of the word. His rejoicing had not only arisen out of the word of God, but out of the practical characteristics of it. The Way was as dear to him as the Truth and the Life. There was no picking and choosing with David, or if indeed he did make a selection, he chose the most practical first. "*As much as in all riches.*" He compared his intense satisfaction with God's will with that of a man who possesses large and varied estates, and the heart to enjoy them. David knew the riches that come of sovereignty and which grow out of conquest; he valued the wealth which proceeds from labour, or is gotten by inheritance: he knew "all riches." The gracious king had been glad to see the gold and silver poured into his treasury that he might devote vast masses of it to the building of the Temple of Jehovah upon Mount Zion. He rejoiced in all sorts of riches consecrated and laid up for the noblest uses, and yet the way of God's word had given him more pleasure than even these. Observe that his joy was personal, distinct, remembered, and abundant. Wonder not that in the previous verse he glories in having spoken much of that which he had so much enjoyed: a man may well talk of that which is his delight.

15. "*I will meditate in thy precepts.*" He who has an inward delight in anything will not long withdraw his mind from it. As the miser often returns to look upon his treasure, so does the devout believer by frequent meditation turn over the priceless wealth which he has discovered in the book of the Lord. To some men meditation is a task; to the man of cleansed way it is a joy. He who has meditated will meditate; he who saith, "I have rejoiced," is the same who adds, "I will meditate." No spiritual exercise

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is more profitable to the soul than that of devout meditation; why are many of us so exceeding slack in it? It is worthy of observation that the preceptory part of God's word was David's special subject of meditation, and this was the more natural because the question was still upon his mind as to how a young man should cleanse his way. Practical godliness is vital godliness.

"*And have respect unto thy ways,*" that is to say, I will think much about them so as to know what thy ways are; and next, I will think much of them so as to have thy ways in great reverence and high esteem. I will see what thy ways are towards me that I may be filled with reverence, gratitude, and love; and then I will observe what are those ways which thou hast prescribed for me, thy ways in which thou wouldest have me follow thee; these I would watch carefully that I may become obedient, and prove myself to be a true servant of such a Master.

Note how the verses grow more *inward* as they proceed: from the speech of verse 13 we advanced to the manifested joy of verse 14, and now we come to the secret meditation of the happy spirit. The richest graces are those which dwell deepest.

16. "*I will delight myself in thy statutes.*" In this verse delight follows meditation, of which it is the true flower and outgrowth. When we have no other solace, but are quite alone, it will be a glad thing for the heart to turn upon itself, and sweetly whisper, "I will delight myself. What if no minstrel sings in the hall, I will delight myself. If the time of the singing of birds has not yet arrived, and the voice of the turtle is not heard in our land, yet I will delight myself." This is the choicest and noblest of all rejoicing; in fact, it is the good part which can never be taken from us; but there is no delighting ourselves with anything below that which God intended to be the soul's eternal satisfaction. The statute-book is intended to be the joy of every loyal subject. When the believer once peruses the sacred pages his soul burns within him as he turns first to one and then to another of the royal words of the great King, words full and firm, immutable and divine.

"*I will not forget thy word.*" Men do not readily forget that which they have treasured up, that which they have meditated on (verse 15), and that which they have often spoken of (verse 13). Yet since we have treacherous memories it is well to bind them well with the knotted cord of "I will not forget."

Note how two "I wills" follow upon two "I haves." We may not promise for the future if we have altogether failed in the past; but where grace has enabled us to accomplish something, we may hopefully expect that it will enable us to do more.

It is curious to observe how this verse is moulded upon verse 8: the changes are rung on the same words, but the meaning is quite different, and there is no suspicion of a vain repetition. The same thought is never given over again in this Psalm; they are dullards who think so. Something in the position of each verse affects its meaning, so that even where its words are almost identical with those of another the sense is delightfully varied. If we do not see an infinite variety of fine shades of thought in this psalm we may conclude that we are colour-blind; if we do not hear many sweet harmonies, we may judge our ears to be dull of hearing, but we may not suspect the Spirit of God of monotony.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 9 TO 16.

*The eight verses alphabetically arranged:—*

9. By what means shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.
10. By day and by night have I sought thee with my whole heart: O let me not wander from thy commandments.
11. By thy grace I have hid thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.
12. Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes.
13. By the words of my lips will I declare all the judgments of thy mouth.
14. By far more than in all riches I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies.
15. By thy help I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.
16. By thy grace I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

—*Theodore Kübler.*

*Whole eight verses*, 9—16. Every verse in the section begins with ב, *a house.* The subject of the section is, The Law of Jehovah purifying the Life. Key-word, זכה (*zacah*), *to be pure*, to make pure, to cleanse.—*F. G. Marchant.*

*Verse* 9.—*Whole verse.* In this passage there is, (1.) A question. (2.) An answer given. In the question, there is the person spoken of, "*a young man*," and his work, "*Wherewithal shall he cleanse his way?*" In this question there are several things supposed. 1. That we are from the birth polluted with sin; for we must be cleansed. It is not *direct* "his way," but "*cleanse* his way." 2. That we should be very early and betimes sensible of this evil; for the question is propounded concerning the young man. 3. That we should earnestly seek for a remedy, how to dry up the issue of sin that runneth upon us. All this is to be supposed.

That which is enquired after is, What remedy there is against it? What course is to be taken? So that the sum of the question is this: How shall a man that is impure, and naturally defiled with sin, be made able, as soon as he cometh to the use of reason, to purge out that natural corruption, and live a holy and pure life to God? The answer is given: "*By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*" Where two things are to be observed. 1. The remedy. 2. The manner how it is applied and made use of.

1. The remedy is the word; by way of address to God, called "*Thy word*"; because, if God had not given direction about it, we should have been at an utter loss. 2. The manner how it is applied and made use of, "*by taking heed thereto*," etc.; by studying and endeavouring a holy conformity to God's will.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 9.—"*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?*" etc. Aristotle, that great dictator in philosophy, despaired of achieving so great an enterprise as the rendering a young man capable of his ηθικα ακροαματα, "his grave and severe lectures of morality"; for that age is light and foolish, yet headstrong and untractable. Now, take a young man all in the heat and boiling of his blood, in the highest fermentation of his youthful lusts; and, at all these disadvantages, let him enter that great school of the Holy Spirit, the divine Scripture, and commit himself to the conduct of those blessed oracles; and he shall effectually be convinced, by his own experience, of the incredible virtue, the vast and mighty power, of God's word, in the success it hath upon him, and in his daily progressions and advances in heavenly wisdom.—*John Gibbon* (*about* 1660) *in* "*The Morning Exercises.*"

*Verse* 9.—"*A young man.*" A prominent place—one of the twenty-two parts—is assigned to young men in the 119th Psalm. It is meet that it should be so. Youth is the season of impression and improvement, young men are the future props of society, and the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, must begin in youth. The strength, the aspirations, the unmarred expectations of youth, are in requisition for the world; O that they may be consecrated to God.—*John Stephen, in* "*The Utterances of the cxix. Psalm,*" 1861.

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*Verse* 9.—For "*young man,*" in the Hebrew the word is נַעַר, *naar, i.e.*, "*shaken off*"; that is to say, from the milder and more tender care of his parents. Thus Mercerus and Savallerius. Secondly, *naar* may be rendered "*shaking off*"; that is to say, the yoke, for a young man begins to cast off the maternal, and frequently the paternal, yoke.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse* 9.—"*Cleanse his way.*" The expression does not absolutely convey the impression that the given young man is in a corrupt and discreditable way which requires cleansing, though this be true of all men originally: Isaiah liii. 6. That which follows makes known that such could not be the case with this young man. The very inquiry shows that his heart is not in a corrupt state. Desire is present, direction is required. The inquiry is —How shall a young man make a clean way—a pure line of conduct—through this defiling world? It is a question, I doubt not, of great anxiety to every convert whose mind is awakened to a sense of sin—how he shall keep clear of the sin, avoid the loose company, and rid himself of the wicked pleasures and practices of this enslaving world. And as he moves on in the line of integrity—many temptations coming in his way, and much inward corruption rising up to control him—how often will the same anxious inquiry arise: Romans vii. 24. It is only in a false estimate of one's own strength that any can think otherwise, and the spirit of such false estimate will be brought low. How felt you, my young friends, who have been brought to Christ, in the day of your resolving to be his? But for all such anxiety there seems to be an answer in the text.

"*By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*" It is not that young men in our day require information: they require the inclination. In the gracious young man there are both, and the word that began feeds the proper motives. The awful threatenings and the sweet encouragements both move him in the right direction. The answer furnished to this anxious inquiry is sufficiently plain and practical. He is directed to the word of God for all direction, and we might say, for all promised assistance. Still the matter presented in this light does not appear to me to bring out the full import of the passage. The inquiry to me would seem to extend over the whole verse.* There is required the cleansing that his way be according to the Divine Word. The enquiry is of the most enlarged comprehension, and will be made only by one who can say that he has been honestly putting himself in the way, as the young man in the 10th and 11th verses; and it can be answered only by the heart that takes in all the strength provided by the blessed God, as is expressed here in the 12th verse. The Psalmist makes the inquiry, he shows how earnestly he had sought to be in the right way, and immediately he finds all his strength in God. Thus he declares how he has been enabled to do rightly, and how he will do rightly in the future.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 9.—Instead of question and answer both in this one verse, the Hebrew demands the construction with question only, leaving the answer to be inferred from the drift of the entire Psalm—thus: "*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way to keep it according to thy word?*" This translation gives precisely the force of the last clause. Hebrew punctuation lacks the interrogation point, so that we have no other clue but the form of the sentence and the sense by which to decide where the question ends.—*Henry Cowles,* 1872.

*Verse* 9.—"*His way.*" אֹרַח, *orach*, which we translate *way* here, signifies a *track*, a *rut*, such as is made by the wheel of a cart or chariot. A *young sinner* has no *broad beaten* path; he has his *private ways* of offence, his *secret pollutions;* and how shall he be cleansed from these? how can he be saved from what will destroy mind, body, and soul? Let him hear what follows; the description is from God.

* This opinion is confirmed by the quotation which follows from Cowles.

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1. He is to *consider* that his way is *impure;* and how abominable this must make him appear in the sight of God. 2. He must examine it *according to God's word*, and carefully hear what God has said concerning *him* and *it*. 3. He must *take heed* to it, לִשְׁמֹר, *lishmor*, to *keep*, *guard*, and *preserve his way*—his general course of life, from all defilement.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 9.—"*By taking heed*," etc. I think the words may be better rendered and supplied thus, *by observing* what is *according to thy word;* which shows how a sinner is to be cleansed from his sins by the blood of Christ, and justified by his righteousness, and be clean through his word; and also how and by whom the work of sanctification is wrought in the heart, even by the Spirit of God, by means of the word, and what is the rule of a man's walk and conversation: he will find the word of God to be profitable, to inform in the doctrines of justification and pardon, to acquaint him with the nature of regeneration and sanctification; and for the correction and amendment of his life and manners, and for his instruction in every branch of manners: 2 Tim. iii. 16.—*John Gill*, 1697—1771.

*Verse* 9.—"*By taking heed.*" There is an especial necessity for this "*Take heed*," because of the proneness of a young man to thoughtlessness, carelessness, presumption, self-confidence. There is an especial necessity for "*taking heed*," because of the difficulty of the way. "Look well to thy goings"; it is a narrow path. "Look well to thy goings"; it is a new path. "Look well to thy goings"; it is a slippery path. "Look well to thy goings"; it is an eventful path.—*James Harrington Evans*, 1785—1849.

*Verse* 9.—"*According to thy word.*" God's word is the glass which discovereth all spiritual deformity, and also the water and soap which washeth and scoureth it away.—*Paul Bayne.*

*Verse* 9.—"*According to thy word.*" I do not say that there are no other guides, no other fences. I do not say that conscience is worth nothing, and conscience in youth is especially sensitive and tender; I do not say that prayer is not a most valuable fence, but prayer without taking heed is only another name for presumption: prayer and carelessness can never walk hand in hand together; and I therefore say that there is no fence nor guard that can so effectually keep out every enemy as prayerful reading of the word of God, bringing every solicitation from the world or from companions, every suggestion from our own hearts and passions, to the test of God's word:—What says the Bible? The answer of the Bible, with the teaching and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, will in all the intricacies of our road be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.—*Barton Bouchier.*

*Verse* 9.—"*Thy word.*" The word is the only weapon (like Goliath's sword, none to equal this), for the hewing down and cutting off of this stubborn enemy, our lusts. The word of God can master our lusts when they are in their greatest pride: if ever lust rageth at one time more than another, it is when youthful blood boils in our veins. Youth is giddy, and his lust is hot and impetuous: his sun is climbing higher still, and he thinks it is a great while to night; so that it must be a strong arm that brings a young man off his lusts, who hath his palate at best advantage to taste sensual pleasure. The vigour of his strength affords him more of the delights of the flesh than crippled age can expect, and he is farther from the fear of death's gun-shot, as he thinks, than old men who are upon the very brink of the grave, and carry the scent of the earth about them, into which they are suddenly to be resolved. Well, let the word of God meet this young gallant in all his bravery, with his feast of sensual delights before him, and but whisper a few syllables in his ear, give his conscience but a prick with the point of its sword, and it shall make him fly in as great haste from them all, as Absalom's brethren did from the feast when they saw Amnon their brother murdered at the table. When David would give the

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young man a receipt to cure him of his lusts, how he may cleanse his whole course and way, he bids him only wash in the waters of the word of God.—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse* 9.—The Scriptures teach us the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering, and the most comfortable way of dying.—*John Flavel*, 1627—1691.

*Verse* 10.—"*With my whole heart have I sought thee.*" There are very few of us that are able to say with the prophet David that we have sought God with our whole heart; to wit, with such integrity and pureness that we have not turned away from that mark as from the most principal thing of our salvation.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 10.—"*With my whole heart have I sought thee.*" Sincerity is in every expression; the heart is open before God. The young man can so speak to the Searcher of hearts. . . . . Let us consider the directness of this kind of converse with God. We use round-about expressions in drawing nigh to God. We say, With my whole heart would I seek thee. We are afraid to be direct. . . . . See how decided in his conscious actings is the young man before you, how open and confiding he is, and such you will find to be the characteristic of his pious mind throughout the varied expressions unfolded in this psalm. Here he declares to the Omniscient One that he had sought him with all his heart. He desired to realize God in everything.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 10 (*first clause*).—God alone sees the heart; the heart alone sees God.—*John Donne*, 1573—1631.

*Verse* 10.—"*O let me not wander from thy commandments.*" David after he had protested that he sought God with his whole heart, besought God that he would not suffer him to decline from his commandments. Hereby let us see what great need we have to call upon God, to the end he may hold us with a mighty strong hand. Yea, and though he hath already mightily put to his helping hand, and we also know that he hath bestowed upon us great and manifest graces; yet this is not all: for there are so many vices and imperfections in our nature, and we are so feeble and weak that we have very great need daily to pray unto him, yea, and that more and more, that he will not suffer us to decline from his commandments.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 10.—The more experience a man hath in the ways of God, the more sensible is he of his own readiness to wander insensibly, by ignorance and inadvertency, from the ways of God; but the young soldier dares run hazards, ride into his adversary's camp, and talk with temptation, being confident he cannot easily go wrong; he is not so much in fear as David who here cries, "*O let me not wander.*"—*David Dickson*, 1583—1662.

*Verse* 11.—"*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*" There laid up in the heart the word has effect. When young men only read the letter of the Book, the word of promise and instruction is deprived of much of its power. Neither will the laying of it up in the mere memory avail. The word must be known and prized, and laid up in the heart; it must occupy the affection as well as the understanding; the whole mind requires to be impregnated with the word of God. Revealed things require to be seen. Then the word of God in the heart—the threatenings, the promises, the excellencies of God's word—and God himself realized, the young man would be inwardly fortified; the understanding enlightened, conscience quickened—he would not sin against his God.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 11.—"*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*" In proportion as the word of the King is present in the heart, "*there* is power" against sin (Eccles. viii. 4). Let us use this means of absolute power more, and more life and more holiness will be ours.—*Frances Ridley Havergal*, 1836—1879.

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*Verse* 11.—"*Thy word have I hid in mine heart.*" It is fit that the word, being "more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold," a peerless pearl, should not be laid up in the porter's lodge only—the outward ear; but even in the cabinet of the mind.—*Dean Boys, quoted by James Ford.*

*Verse* 11.—"*Thy word have I hid in mine heart.*" There is great difference between Christians and worldlings. The worldling hath his treasures in jewels without him; the Christian hath them within. Neither indeed is there any receptacle wherein to receive and keep the word of consolation but the heart only. If thou have it in thy mouth only, it shall be taken from thee; if thou have it in thy book only, thou shalt miss it when thou hast most to do with it; but if thou lay it up in thy heart, as Mary did the words of the angel, no enemy shall ever be able to take it from thee, and thou shalt find it a comfortable treasure in time of thy need.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 11.—"*Thy word have I hid in mine heart.*" This saying, *to hide*, importeth that David studied not to be ambitious to set forth himself and to make a glorious show before men; but that he had God for a witness of that secret desire which was within him. He never looked to worldly creatures; but being content that he had so great a treasure, he knew full well that God who had given it him would so surely and safely guard it, as that it should not be laid open to Satan to be taken away. Saint Paul also declareth unto us (1 Tim. i. 19) that the chest wherein this treasure must be hid is a good conscience. For it is said, that many being void of this good conscience, have lost also their faith, and have been robbed thereof. As if a man should forsake his goods and put them in hazard, without shutting adoor, it were an easy matter for thieves to come in and to rob and spoil him of all; even so, if we leave at random to Satan the treasures which God hath given us in his word, without it be hidden in this good conscience, and in the very bottom of our heart as David here speaketh, we shall be spoiled thereof.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 11.—"*Thy word have I hid in mine heart.*"—Remembered, approved, delighted in it.—*William Nicholson* (—1671), *in* "*David's Harp Strung and Tuned.*"

*Verse* 11.—"*Thy word.*" *Thy saying*, thy oracle; any communication from God to the soul, whether promise, or command, or answer. It means a direct and distinct message, while "word" is more general, and applies to the whole revelation. This is the ninth of the ten words referring to the revelation of God in this psalm.—*James G. Murphy*, 1875.

*Verse* 11.—"*In my heart.*" Bernard observes, bodily bread in the cupboard may be eaten of mice, or moulder and waste: but when it is taken down into the body, it is free from such danger. If God enable thee to take thy soul-food into thine heart, it is free from all hazards.—*George Swinnock.* 1627—1673.

*Verse* 11.—"*That I might not sin against thee.*" Among many excellent virtues of the word of God, this is one: that if we keep it in our heart, it keeps us from sin, which is against God and against ourselves. We may mark it by experience. that the word is first stolen either out of the mind of man, and the remembrance of it is away; or at least out of the affection of man; so that the reverence of it is gone, before that a man can be drawn to the committing of a sin. So long as Eve kept by faith the word of the Lord, she resisted Satan; but from the time she doubted of that, which God made most certain by his word, at once she was snared.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 12.—"*Blessed art thou, O* LORD: *teach me thy statutes.*" This verse contains a prayer, with the reason of the prayer. The prayer is, "*Teach me thy statutes*"; the reason, moving him to seek this, ariseth of a consideration of that infinite good which is in God. He is a blessed God, the fountain of

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all felicity, without whom no welfare or happiness can be to the creature. And for this cause David earnestly desiring to be in fellowship and communion with God, which he knows none can attain unto unless he be taught of God to know God's way and walk in it; therefore, I say, he prayeth the more earnestly that the Lord would teach him his statutes. Oh that we also could wisely consider this, that our felicity stands in fellowship with God.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 12.—In this verse we have two things, 1. An acknowledgment of God's blessedness, "*Blessed art thou, O* LORD"; *i.e.*, being possessed of all fulness, thou hast an infinite complacency in the enjoyment of thyself; and thou art he alone in the enjoyment of whom I can be blessed and happy; and thou art willing and ready to give out of thy fulness, so that thou art the fountain of blessedness to thy creatures. 2. A request or petition, "*Teach me thy statutes*"; *q.d.*, seeing thou hast all fulness in thyself, and art sufficient to thy own blessedness; surely thou hast enough for me. There is enough to content thyself, therefore enough to satisfy me. This encourages me in my address.

Again,—Teach me that I may know wherein to seek my blessedness and happiness, even in thy blessed self; and that I may know how to come by the enjoyment of thee, so that I may be blessed in thee. Further,—Thou art blessed originally, the Fountain of all blessing; thy blessedness is an everlasting fountain, a full fountain; always pouring out blessedness: O, let me have this blessing from thee, this drop from the fountain.—*William Wisheart, in "Theologia, or, Discourses of God,"* 1716.

*Verse* 12.—Since God is blessed, we cannot but desire to learn his ways. If we see any earthly being happy, we have a great desire to learn out his course, as thinking by it we might be happy also. Every one would sail with that man's wind who prospereth; though in earthly things it holdeth not alway: yet a blessed God cannot by any way of his bring to other than blessedness. Thus, he who is blessedness itself, he will be ready to communicate his ways to other: the excellentest things are most communicative. —*Paul Bayne.*

*Verse* 12.—"*Teach me.*" He had Nathan, he had priests to instruct him, himself was a prophet; but all their teaching was nothing without God's blessing, and therefore he prays, "*Teach me.*"—*William Nicholson.*

*Verse* 12.—"*Teach me.*" These words convey more than the simple imparting of knowledge, for he said before he had such, when he said he hid God's words in his heart; and in verse 7 he said he "*had learned the judgments of his justice*": it includes grace to observe his law.—*Robert Bellarmine*, 1542—1621.

*Verse* 12.—"*Teach me.*" If this were practised now, to join prayer with hearing, that when we offer ourselves to be taught of men, we would therewith send up prayer to God, before preaching, in time of preaching and after preaching, we would soon prove more learned and religious than we are.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 12.—"*Teach me thy statutes.*" Whoever reads this psalm with attention must observe in it one great characteristic, and that is, how decisive are its statements that in keeping the commandments of God nothing can be done by human strength; but that it is he who must create the will for the performance of such duty. The Psalmist entreats the Lord to open his eyes that he may behold the wondrous things of the law, to teach him his statutes, to remove from him the way of lying, to incline his heart unto his testimonies, and not to covetousness, to turn away his eyes from beholding vanity, and not to take the word of truth utterly out of his mouth. Each of these petitions shows how deeply impressed he was of his entire helplessness as regarded himself, and how completely dependent upon God he felt himself for any advancement he could hope to make in the knowledge of the truth. All his studies in the divine law, all his aspirations after holiness

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of life, he was well assured could never meet with any measure of success, except by the grace of God preventing and co-operating, implanting in him a right desire, and acting as an infallible guide, whereby alone he would be enabled to arrive at the proper sense of Holy Scripture, as well as to correct principles of action in his daily walk before God and man.—*George Phillips*, 1846.

*Verse* 12.—"*Teach me thy statutes.*"—If it be asked why the Psalmist entreats to be taught, when he has just before been declaring his knowledge, the answer is that he seeks instruction as to the practical working of those principles which he has learnt theoretically.—*Michael Ayguan* (1416), *in Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 13.—"*With my lips have I declared,*" etc. Above all, be careful to talk of that to others which you do daily learn yourself, and out of the abundance of your heart speak of good things unto men.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 13.—Having hid the purifying word in his heart, the Psalmist will *declare it with his lips;* and as it is so pure throughout, he will declare all in it, without exception. When the fountain of the heart is purified, the streams from the lips will be pure also. The declaring lips of the Psalmist are here placed in antithesis to the mouth of Jehovah, by which the judgments were originally pronounced.—*F. G. Marchant.*

*Verse* 13.—As the consciousness of having communicated our knowledge and our spiritual gifts is a means of encouragement to seek a greater measure, so it is an evidence of the sincerity and fruitfulness of what knowledge we have: "*Teach me thy statutes. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.*"—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 13.—"*With my lips,*" etc. The tongue is a most excellent member of the body, being well used to the glory of God and the edification of others; and yet it cannot pronounce without help of the lips. The Lord hath made the body of man with such marvellous wisdom, that no member of it can say to another, I have no need of thee; but such is man's dulness, that he observes not how useful unto him is the smallest member in the body, till it be taken from him. If our lips were clasped for a time, and our tongue thus shut up, we would esteem it a great mercy to have it loosed again; as that cripple, when he found the use of his feet, leaped for joy and glorified God.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 13.—"*Declared all the judgments.*" He says in another place (Ps. xxxvi. 6), "*Thy judgments are like a great deep.*" As the apostle says (Rom. xi. 33, 34), "*O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord?*" If the judgments are unsearchable, how then says the prophet, "*I have declared all the judgments of thy mouth*"? We answer, —peradventure there are judgments of God which are not the judgments of his mouth, but of his heart and hand only.

We make a distinction, for we have no fear that the sacred Scripture weakens itself by contradictions. It has not said, The judgments of his mouth are a great deep; but "*Thy judgments.*" Neither has the apostle said, The unsearchable judgments of his mouth: but "*His unsearchable judgments.*" We may regard the judgments of God, then, as those hidden ones which he has not revealed to us; but the judgments of his mouth, those which he has made known, and has spoken by the mouth of the prophets.—*Ambrose*, 340—397.

*Verse* 14.—"*I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies,*" etc. The Psalmist saith not only, "I have rejoiced in thy testimonies," but, "in the *way* of thy testimonies." Way is one of the words by which the law is expressed. God's laws are ways that lead us to God; and so it may be taken here, "the

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way which thy testimonies point out, and call me unto; or else his own practice, as a man's course is called his way; his delight was not in speculation or talk, but in obedience and practice: "*in the way of thy testimonies.*" He tells us the degree of his joy, "*as much as in all riches:*" "as much," not to show the equality of these things, as if we should have the same affection for the world as for the word of God; but "as much," because we have no higher comparison. This is that which worldlings dote upon, and delight in; now as much as they rejoice in worldly possessions, so much do I rejoice in the way of thy testimonies. For I suppose David doth not compare his own delight in the word, with his own delight in wealth; but his own choice and delight, with the delight and choice of others. If he had spoken of himself both in the one respect and in the other, the expression was very high. David who was called to a crown, and in a capacity of enjoying much in the world, gold, silver, land, goods, largeness of territory, and a compound of all that which all men jointly, and all men severally do possess; yet was more pleased in the holiness of God's ways, than in all the world: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark viii. 36).—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 14.—"*The way of thy testimonies.*" The testimony of God is his word, for it testifies his will; the "*way*" of his testimony is the practice of his word, and doing of that which he hath declared to be his will, and wherein he hath promised to show us his love. David found not this sweetness in hearing, reading, and professing the word only; but in practising of it: and in very deed, the only cause why we find not the comfort that is in the word of God is that we practise it not by walking in the way thereof. It is true, at the first it is bitter to nature, which loves carnal liberty, to render itself as captive to the word: *laboriosa virtutis via*, and much pains must be taken before the heart be subdued; but when it is once begun, it renders such joy as abundantly recompenses all the former labour and grief.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 14.—Riches are acquired with difficulty, enjoyed with trembling, and lost with bitterness.—*Bernard*, 1091—1157.

*Verse* 14.—A poor, good woman said, in time of persecution, when they took away the Christian's Bibles, "I cannot part with my Bible; I know not how to live without it." When a gracious soul has heard a profitable sermon, he says, "Methinks it does me good at heart; it is the greatest nourishment I have": "*I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.*"—*Oliver Heywood*, 1629—1702.

*Verse* 15.—"*I will meditate in thy precepts,*" etc. All along David had shown what he *had* done; now, what he *will* do. Verse 10, "I have sought"; verse 11, "I have hid"; verse 12, "I have declared"; verse 14, "I have rejoiced." Now in the two following verses he doth engage himself to set his mark towards God for time to come. "*I will meditate in thy precepts,*" etc. We do not rest upon anything already done and past, but continue the same diligence unto the end. Here is David's hearty resolution and purpose, to go on for time to come. Many will say, Thus I have done when I was young, or had more leisure and rest; in that I have meditated and conferred. You must continue still in a holy course. To begin to build, and leave unfinished, is an argument of folly.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 15.—"*I will meditate in thy precepts.*" Not only *of* thy precepts or concerning them, but *in* them, while engaged in doing them.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verse* 15.—"*I will.*" See this "I will" repeated again and again (verses 48, 78). In meditation it is hard (sometimes at least) to take off our thoughts from the pre-engagements of other subjects, and apply them to the duty. But it is harder to become duly serious in acting in it, harder yet to

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dive and ponder; and hardest of all to continue in an abode of thoughts, and dwell long enough, and after views to make reviews, to react the same thinkings, to taste things over and over, when the freshness and newness is past, when by long thinking the things before us seem old. We are ready to grow dead and flat in a performance except we stir up ourselves often in it. It is hard to hold on and hold up, unless we hold up a wakeful eye, a warm affection, a strong and quick repeated resolution; yea, and without often lifting up the soul to Christ for fresh recruits of strength to hold on. David, that so excellent artist in this way, saith he *will meditate*, he often saith *he will*. Doubtless, he not only said "I will" when he was to make his entrance into this hard work; but likewise for continuance in it, to keep up his heart from flagging, till he well ended his work. It is not the digging into the golden mine, but the digging long, that finds and fetches up the treasure. It is not the diving into the sea, but staying longer, that gets the greater quantity of pearls. To draw out the golden thread of meditation to its due length till the spiritual ends be attained, this is a rare and happy attainment.—*Nathanael Ranew*, 1670.

*Verse* 15.—"*I will meditate.*" How much our "*rejoicing in the testimonies*" of God would be increased by a more habitual meditation upon them! This is, however, a resolution which the carnal mind can never be brought to make, and to which the renewed mind through remaining depravity is often sadly reluctant. But it is a blessed employment, and will repay a thousandfold the difficulty of engaging the too backward heart in the duty. —*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 15.—Meditation is of that happy influence, it makes the mind wise, the affections warm, the soul fat and flourishing, and the conversation greatly fruitful.—*Nathanael Ranew.*

*Verse* 15.—"*Meditate in thy precepts.*" Study the Scriptures. If a famous man do but write an excellent book, O how we do long to see it! Or suppose I could tell you that there is in France or Germany a book that God himself wrote, I am confident men may draw all the money out of your purses to get that book. You have it by you: O that you would study it! When the eunuch was riding in his chariot, he was studying the prophet Isaiah. He was not angry when Philip came and, as we would have thought, asked him a bold question: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" (Acts viii. 27—30); he was glad of it. One great end of the year of release was, that the law might be read (Deut. xxxi. 9—13). It is the wisdom of God that speaks in the Scripture (Luke xi. 49); therefore, whatever else you mind, really and carefully study the Bible.—*Samuel Jacomb* (1629—1659), *in The Morning Exercises.*

*Verse* 15.—"*I will have respect.*" The one is the fruit of the other: "*I will meditate*"; and then, "*I will have respect.*" Meditation is in order to practice; and if it be right, it will beget a respect to the ways of God. We do not meditate that we may rest in contemplation, but in order to obedience: "Thou shalt meditate in the book of the law day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein" (Joshua i. 8).—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 15.—"*And have respect unto thy ways.*"—As an archer hath to his mark.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 15.—"*Respect unto thy ways.*" It is not without a peculiar pleasure, when travelling, that we *contemplate* the splendid buildings, the gardens, the fortifications, or the fine-art galleries. But what are all these sights to the *contemplation of the ways of God*, which he himself has traversed, or has marked out for man? And what practical need there is that we consider the way, for else we shall be as a sleepy coachman, not carefully observant of the road, who may soon upset himself and his passengers.—*Martin Geier.*

*Verse* 15.—"*Thy ways.*" David's second internal action concerning the word is consideration; where mark well, how by a most proper speech he

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calls the word of God the *ways* of God; partly, because by it God comes near unto men, revealing himself to them, who otherways could not be known of them; for he dwells in light inaccessible; and partly, because the word is the *way* which leads men to God. So then, because by it God cometh down to men, and by it men go up unto God, and know how to get access to him, therefore is his word called his *way*.—*William Cowper.*

*Verses* 15, 16.—The two last verses of this section present to us a threefold internal action of David's soul toward the word of God; first, meditation; secondly, consideration; thirdly, delectation: every one of these proceeds from another, and they mutually strengthen one another. Meditation brings the word to the mind; consideration views it and looks at length into it, whereof is bred delectation. That which comes into the mind, were it never so good, if it be not considered, goes as it came, leaving neither instruction nor joy; but being once presented by meditation, if it be pondered by consideration, then it breeds delectation, which is the perfection of godliness, in regard of the internal action.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 16.—"*I will delight myself*," etc. He protested before that he had great delight in the testimonies of God: now he saith he will still delight in them. A man truly godly, the more good he doth, the more he desireth, delighteth and resolveth to do. Temporisers, on the contrary, who have but a show of godliness, and the love of it is not rooted in their heart, how soon are they weary of well-doing! If they have done any small external duty of religion, they rest as if they were fully satisfied, and there needed no more good to be done by them. True religion is known by hungering and thirsting after righteousness, by perseverance in well-doing, and an earnest desire to do more.

But to this he adds that *he will not forget the word.* The graces of the Spirit do every one fortify and strengthen another; for ye see meditation helps consideration. Who can consider of that whereof he thinks not? Consideration again breeds delectation; and as here ye see, delectation strengthens memory: because he delights in the word he will not forget the word; and memory again renews meditation. Thus every grace of the Spirit helps another; and by the contrary, one of them neglected, works a wonderful decay of the remnant.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 16—"*I will delight myself.*" When righteousness, from a matter of constraint, becomes a matter of choice, it instantly changes its whole nature, and rises to a higher moral rank than before. The same God whom it is impossible to move by law's authority, moves of his own proper and original inclination in the very path of the law's righteousness. And so, we, in proportion as we are like unto God, are alive to the virtues of that same law, to the terror of whose severities we are altogether dead. We are no longer under a schoolmaster; but obedience is changed from a thing of force into a thing of freeness. It is moulded to a higher state and character than before. We are not driven to it by the God of authority. We are drawn to it by the regards of a now willing heart to all moral and all spiritual excellence.—*Thomas Chalmers*, 1780—1847.

*Verse* 16.—Meditation must not be a dull, sad, and dispirited thing: not a driving like the chariots of the Egyptians when their wheels were taken off, but like the chariots of Amminadib (Cant. vi. 12) that ran swiftly. So let us pray,—Lord, in meditation make me like the chariots of Amminadib, that my swift running may evidence my delight in meditating. Holy David makes delight such an ingredient or assistant here, that sometimes he calls the exercise of meditation by the name of "*delight*," speaking in the foregoing verse of this meditation, "*I will meditate of thy precepts*," and in the 16th verse, "*I will delight myself in thy statutes*"; which is the same with meditation, only with superadding the excellent qualification due meditation should have; the name of delight is given to

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meditation because of its noble concomitant—holy joy and satisfaction.—*Nathanael Ranew.*

*Verse* 16.—"*Delight myself.*" The word is very emphatical: אשתעשע, *eshtaasha, I will skip about and jump for joy.—Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 16.—"*I will not forget.*" Delight preventeth forgetfulness: the mind will run upon that which the heart delighteth in; and the heart is where the treasure is (Matt. vi. 21). Worldly men that are intent upon carnal interests, forget the word, because it is not their delight. If anything displeases us, we are glad if we can forget it; it is some release from an inconvenience, to take off our thoughts from it; but it doubleth the contentment of a thing that we are delighted in, to remember it, and call it to mind. In the outward school, if a scholar by his own averseness from learning, or by the severity and imprudence of his master, hath no delight in his book, all that he learneth is lost and forgotten, it goeth in at one ear, and out at the other: but this is the true art of memory, to cause them to delight in what they learn. Such instructions as we take in with sweetness, they stick with us, and run in our minds night and day. So saith David here, "*I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 16.—"*Forget.*" I never yet heard of a covetous old man, who had forgotten where he had buried his treasure.—*Cicero de Senectute.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 17 TO 24.

DEAL bountifully with thy servant, *that* I may live, and keep thy word.

18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

19 I *am* a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.

20 My soul breaketh for the longing *that it hath* unto thy judgments at all times.

21 Thou hast rebuked the proud *that are* cursed, which do err from thy commandments.

22 Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.

23 Princes also did sit *and* speak against me: *but* thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

24 Thy testimonies also *are* my delight *and* my counsellors.

In this section the trials of the way appear to be manifest to the Psalmist's mind, and he prays accordingly for the help which will meet his case. As in the last eight verses he prayed as a youth newly come into the world, so here he pleads as a servant and a pilgrim, who growingly finds himself to be a stranger in an enemy's country. His appeal is to God alone, and his prayer is specially direct and personal. He speaks with the Lord as a man speaketh with his friend.

17. "*Deal bountifully with thy servant.*" He takes pleasure in owning his duty to God, and counts it the joy of his heart to be in the service of his God. Out of his condition he makes a plea, for a servant has some hold upon a master; but in this case the wording of the plea shuts out the idea of legal claim, since he seeks bounty rather than reward. Let my wage be according to thy goodness, and not according to my merit. Reward me according to the largeness of thy liberality, and not according to the scantiness of my service. The hired servants of our Father have all of them bread enough and to spare, and he will not leave one of his household to perish with hunger. If the Lord will only treat us as he treats the least of his servants we may be well content, for all his true servants are sons, princes of the blood, heirs of life eternal. David felt that his great needs required a bountiful provision, and that his little desert would never earn such a supply; hence he must throw himself upon God's grace, and look for the great things he needed from the great goodness of the Lord. He begs for a liberality of grace, after the fashion of one who prayed, "O Lord, thou must give me great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy will not serve my turn."

"*That I may live.*" Without abundant mercy he could not live. It takes great grace to keep a saint alive. Even life is a gift of divine bounty to such undeserving ones as we are. Only the Lord can keep us in being, and it is mighty grace which preserves to us the life which we have forfeited by our sin. It is right to desire to live, it is meet to pray to live, it is just to ascribe prolonged life to the favour of God. Spiritual life, without which this natural life is mere existence, is also to be sought of the Lord's bounty, for it is the noblest work of divine grace, and in it the bounty of God is gloriously displayed. The Lord's servants cannot serve him in their own strength, for they cannot even live unless his grace abounds towards them.

"*And keep thy word.*" This should be the rule, the object, and the joy of our life. We may not wish to live and sin; but we may pray to live and keep God's word. Being is a poor thing if it be not well-being. Life is



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only worth keeping while we can keep God's word; indeed, there is no life in the highest sense apart from holiness: life while we break the law is but a name to live.

The prayer of this verse shows that it is only through divine bounty or grace that we can live as faithful servants of God, and manifest obedience to his commands. If we give God service it must be because he gives us grace. We work *for* him because he works *in* us. Thus we may make a chain out of the opening verses of the three first octaves of this psalm: verse 1 blesses the holy man, verse 9 asks how we can attain to such holiness, and verse 17 traces such holiness to its secret source, and shows us how to seek the blessing. The more a man prizes holiness and the more earnestly he strives after it, the more will he be driven towards God for help therein, for he will plainly perceive that his own strength is insufficient, and that he cannot even so much as live without the bounteous assistance of the Lord his God.

18. "*Open thou mine eyes.*" This is a part of the bountiful dealing which he has asked for; no bounty is greater than that which benefits our person, our soul, our mind, and benefits it in so important an organ as the eye. It is far better to have the eyes opened than to be placed in the midst of the noblest prospects and remain blind to their beauty. "*That I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*" Some men can perceive no wonders in the gospel, but David felt sure that there were glorious things in the law: he had not half the Bible, but he prized it more than some men prize the whole. He felt that God had laid up great bounties in his word, and he begs for power to perceive, appreciate, and enjoy the same. We need not so much that God should give us more benefits, as the ability to see what he has given.

The prayer implies a conscious darkness, a dimness of spiritual vision, a powerlessness to remove that defect, and a full assurance that God can remove it. It shows also that the writer knew that there were vast treasures in the word which he had not yet fully seen, marvels which he had not yet beheld, mysteries which he had scarcely believed. The Scriptures teem with marvels; the Bible is wonder-land; it not only relates miracles, but it is itself a world of wonders. Yet what are these to closed eyes? And what man can open his own eyes, since he is born blind? God himself must reveal revelation to each heart. Scripture needs opening, but not one half so much as our eyes do: the veil is not on the book, but on our hearts. What perfect precepts, what precious promises, what priceless privileges are neglected by us because we wander among them like blind men among the beauties of nature, and they are to us as a landscape shrouded in darkness!

The Psalmist had a measure of spiritual perception, or he would never have known that there were wondrous things to be seen, nor would he have prayed, "open thou mine eyes"; but what he had seen made him long for a clearer and wider sight. This longing proved the genuineness of what he possessed, for it is a test mark of the true knowledge of God that it causes its possessor to thirst for deeper knowledge.

David's prayer in this verse is a good sequel to verse 10, which corresponds to it in position in its octave: there he said, "O let me not wander," and who so apt to wander as a blind man? and there, too, he declared, "with my whole heart have I sought thee," and hence the desire to see the object of his search. Very singular are the interlacings of the boughs of the huge tree of this psalm, which has many wonders even within itself if we have opened eyes to mark them.

19. "*I am a stranger in the earth.*" This is meant for a plea. By divine command men are bound to be kind to strangers, and what God commands in others he will exemplify in himself. The psalmist was a stranger for God's sake, else had he been as much at home as worldlings are: he was not a stranger to God, but a stranger to the world, a banished man so long as he was out of heaven. Therefore he pleads, "*Hide not thy commandments*

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*from me.*" If these are gone, what have I else? Since nothing around me is mine, what can I do if I lose thy word? Since none around me know or care to know the way to thyself, what shall I do if I fail to see thy commands, by which alone I can guide my steps to the land where thou dwellest? David implies that God's commands were his solace in his exile: they reminded him of home, and they showed him the way thither, and therefore he begged that they might never be hidden from him, by his being unable either to understand them or to obey them. If spiritual light be withdrawn the command is hidden, and this a gracious heart greatly deprecates. What would be the use of opened eyes if the best object of sight were hidden from their view? While we wander here we can endure all the ills of this foreign land with patience if the word of God is applied to our hearts by the Spirit of God; but if the heavenly things which make for our peace were hid from our eyes we should be in an evil case,—in fact, we should be at sea without a compass, in a desert without a guide, in an enemy's country without a friend.

This prayer is a supplement to "open thou mine eyes," and, as the one prays to see, the other deprecates the negative of seeing, namely, the command being hidden, and so out of sight. We do well to look at both sides of the blessing we are seeking, and to plead for it from every point of view. The prayers are appropriate to the characters mentioned: as he is a servant he asks for opened eyes that his eyes may ever be towards his Lord, as the eyes of a servant should be; as a stranger he begs that he may not be strange to the way in which he is to walk towards his home. In each case his entire dependence is upon God alone.

Note how the third of the second octave (11) has the same keyword as this third of the third octave: "Thy word have I hid," "Hide not thy commandments from me." This invites a meditation upon the different senses of hiding *in* and hiding *from*.

20. "*My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.*" True godliness lies very much in desires. As we are not what we shall be, so also we are not what we would be. The desires of gracious men after holiness are intense,—they cause a wear of heart, a straining of the mind, till it feels ready to snap with the heavenly pull. A high value of the Lord's commandment leads to a pressing desire to know and to do it, and this so weighs upon the soul that it is ready to break in pieces under the crush of its own longings. What a blessing it is when all our desires are after the things of God. We may well long for such longings.

God's judgments are his decisions upon points which else had been in dispute. Every precept is a judgment of the highest court upon a point of action, an infallible and immutable decision upon a moral or spiritual question. The word of God is a code of justice from which there is no appeal.

> "This is the Judge which ends the strife
> Where wit and reason fail;
> Our guide through devious paths of life,
> Our shield when doubts assail."
>
> —*Watts.*

David had such reverence for the word, and such a desire to know it, and to be conformed to it, that his longings caused him a sort of heart-break, which he here pleads before God. Longing is the soul of praying, and when the soul longs till it breaks, it cannot be long before the blessing will be granted. The most intimate communion between the soul and its God is carried on by the process described in the text. God reveals his will, and our heart longs to be conformed thereto. God judges, and our heart rejoices in the verdict. This is fellowship of heart most real and thorough.

Note well that our desire after the mind of God should be constant; we should feel holy longings "*at all times.*" Desires which can be put off and on like our garments are at best but mere wishes, and possibly they are hardly true enough to be called by that name,—they are temporary emotions

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born of excitement, and doomed to die when the heat which created them has cooled down. He who always longs to know and do the right is the truly right man. His judgment is sound, for he loves all God's judgments, and follows them with constancy. His times shall be good, since he longs to be good and to do good at all times.

Remark how this fourth of the third eight chimes with the fourth of the fourth eight. "My soul breaketh"; "my soul melteth." There is surely some recondite poetic art about all this, and it is well for us to be careful in studying what the psalmist was so careful in composing.

21. "*Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed.*" This is one of God's judgments: he is sure to deal out a terrible portion to men of lofty looks. God rebuked Pharaoh with sore plagues, and at the Red Sea "the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord." In the person of the haughty Egyptian he taught all the proud that he will certainly abase them. Proud men are cursed men: nobody blesses them, and they soon become a burden to themselves. In itself, pride is a plague and torment. Even if no curse came from the law of God, there seems to be a law of nature that proud men should be unhappy men. This led David to abhor pride; he dreaded the rebuke of God and the curse of the law. The proud sinners of his day were his enemies, and he felt happy that God was in the quarrel as well as he.

"*Which do err from thy commandments.*" Only humble hearts are obedient, for they alone will yield to rule and government. Proud men's looks are high, too high to mark their own feet and keep the Lord's way. Pride lies at the root of all sin: if men were not arrogant they would not be disobedient.

God rebukes pride even when the multitudes pay homage to it, for he sees in it rebellion against his own majesty, and the seeds of yet further rebellions. It is the sum of sin. Men talk of an honest pride; but if they were candid they would see that it is of all sins the least honest, and the least becoming in a creature, and especially in a fallen creature: yet so little do proud men know their own true condition under the curse of God, that they set up to censure the godly, and express contempt for them, as may be seen in the next verse. They are themselves contemptible, and yet they are contemptuous towards their betters. We may well love the judgments of God when we see them so decisively levelled against the haughty upstarts who would fain lord it over righteous men; and we may well be of good comfort under the rebukes of the ungodly since their power to hurt us is destroyed by the Lord himself. "The Lord rebuke thee" is answer enough for all the accusations of men or devils.

In the fifth of the former octave the Psalmist wrote, "I have declared all the judgments of thy mouth, and here he continues in the same strain, giving a particular instance of the Lord's judgments against haughty rebels. In the next two portions the fifth verses deal with lying and vanity, and pride is one of the most common forms of those evils.

22. "*Remove from me reproach and contempt.*" These are painful things to tender minds. David could bear them for righteousness' sake, but they were a heavy yoke, and he longed to be free from them. To be slandered, and then to be despised in consequence of the vile accusation, is a grievous affliction. No one likes to be traduced, or even to be despised. He who says, "I care nothing for my reputation," is not a wise man, for in Solomon's esteem "a good name is better than precious ointment." The best way to deal with slander is to pray about it: God will either remove it, or remove the sting from it. Our own attempts at clearing ourselves are usually failures; we are like the boy who wished to remove the blot from his copy, and by his bungling made it ten times worse. When we suffer from a libel it is better to pray about it than go to law over it, or even to demand an apology from the inventor. O ye who are reproached, take your matters before the highest court, and leave them with the Judge of all the earth.

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God will rebuke your proud accuser; be ye quiet and let your advocate plead your cause.

"*For I have kept thy testimonies.*" Innocence may justly ask to be cleared from reproach. If there be truth in the charges alleged against us what can we urge with God? If, however, we are wrongfully accused our appeal has a *locus standi* in the court and cannot be refused. If through fear of reproach we forsake the divine testimony we shall deserve the coward's doom; our safety lies in sticking close to the true and to the right. God will keep those who keep his testimonies. A good conscience is the best security for a good name; reproach will not abide with those who abide with Christ, neither will contempt remain upon those who remain faithful to the ways of the Lord.

This verse stands as a parallel both in sense and position to verse 6, and it has the catchword of "testimonies," by which it chimes with 14.

23. "*Princes also did sit and speak against me.*" David was high game, and the great ones of the earth went a hawking after him. Princes saw in him a greatness which they envied, and therefore they abused him. On their thrones they might have found something better to consider and speak about, but they turned the seat of judgment into the seat of the scorner. Most men covet a prince's good word, and to be spoken ill of by a great man is a great discouragement to them, but the Psalmist bore his trial with holy calmness. Many of the lordly ones were his enemies, and made it their business to speak ill of him: they held sittings for scandal, sessions for slander, parliaments of falsehood, and yet he survived all their attempts upon him.

"*But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*" This was brave indeed. He was God's servant, and therefore he attended to his Master's business; he was God's servant, and therefore felt sure that his Lord would defend him. He gave no heed to his princely slanderers, he did not even allow his thoughts to be disturbed by a knowledge of their plotting in conclave. Who were these malignants that they should rob God of his servant's attention, or deprive the Lord's chosen of a moment's devout communion. The rabble of princes were not worth five minutes' thought, if those five minutes had to be taken from holy meditation. It is very beautiful to see the two sittings: the princes sitting to reproach David, and David sitting with his God and his Bible, answering his traducers by never answering them at all. Those who feed upon the word grow strong and peaceful, and are by God's grace hidden from the strife of tongues.

Note that in the close of the former octave he had said, "I will meditate," and here he shows how he had redeemed his promise, even under great provocation to forget it. It is a praiseworthy thing when the resolve of our happy hours is duly carried out in our seasons of affliction.

*Verse* 24. "*Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.*" They were not only themes for meditation, but "also" sources of delight and means of guidance. While his enemies took counsel with each other the holy man took counsel with the testimonies of God. The fowlers could not drive the bird from its nest with all their noise. It was *their* delight to slander and *his* delight to meditate. The words of the Lord serve us for many purposes; in our sorrows they are our delight, and in our difficulties they are our guide; we derive joy from them and discover wisdom in them. If we desire to find comfort in the Scriptures we must submit ourselves to their counsel, and when we follow their counsel it must not be with reluctance but with delight. This is the safest way of dealing with those who plot for our ruin; let us give more heed to the true testimonies of the Lord than to the false witness of our foes. The best answer to accusing princes is the word of the justifying King.

In verse 16 David said, "I will delight in thy statutes," and here he says "they are my delight": thus resolutions formed in God's strength come to fruit, and spiritual desires ripen into actual attainments. O that it might be so with all the readers of these lines.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 17 TO 24.

*Verse* 17.—"*Deal bountifully with thy servant,*" etc. These words might be—Render unto thy servant, or upon thy servant. A deep signification seems to be here involved. The holy man will take the responsibility of being dealt with, not certainly as a mere sinful man, but as a man placing himself in the way appointed for reconciliation. Such we find to be the actual case, as you read in the 16th verse, in the Part immediately preceding —"I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word." Now, the statutes of the Lord referred pre-eminently to the sacrifices for sin, and the cleansings for purifications that were prescribed in the Law. You have to conceive of the man of God as being in the midst of the Levitical ritual, for which you find him making all preparations: 1 Chron. xxii., xxiii., xxiv. Placing himself, therefore, upon these, he would pray the Lord to deal with him according to them; or, as we, in New Testament language, would say,—placing himself on the great atonement, the believer would pray the Lord to deal with him according to his standing in Christ, which would be in graciousness or bounty. For if the Lord be just to condemn without the atonement, he is also just to pardon through the atonement; yea, he is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 17.—"*Deal bountifully,*" etc. O Lord, I am constantly resolved to obey and adhere to thy known will all the days of my life: O make me those gracious returns which thou hast promised to all such.—*Henry Hammond.*

*Verse* 17.—"*Deal bountifully . . . that I may keep thy word,*" etc. A faithful servant should count his by-past service richly rewarded by being employed yet more in further service, as this prayer teacheth; for David entreats that he may live and keep God's word.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 17.—"*Bountifully.*" And indeed, remembering what a poor, weak, empty, and helpless creature the most experienced believer is in himself, it is not to be conceived that anything short of a *bountiful* supply of grace can answer the emergency.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 17.—"*Thy servant.*" That he styles himself so frequently the servant of God notes the reverent estimation he had of his God, in that he accounts it more honourable to be called the servant of God who was above him than the king of a mighty, ancient, and most famous people that were under him. And indeed, since the angels are styled his ministers, shall men think it a shame to serve him? and especially since he of his goodness hath made them our servants, "ministering spirits" to us? Should we not joyfully serve him who hath made all his creatures to serve us, and exempted us from the service of all other, and hath only bound us to serve himself?—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 17.—"*That I may live.*" As a man must "*live*" in order to work, the first petition is, that God would "*deal with his servant,*" according to the measure of grace and mercy, enabling him to "*live*" the life of faith, and strengthening him by the Spirit of might in the inner man.—*George Horne,* 1730—1792.

*Verse* 17.—"*That I may live, and keep thy word.*" David joins here two together, which whosoever disjoins cannot be blessed. He desires to live; but so to live that he may keep God's word. To a reprobate man, who lives a rebel to his Maker, it had been good (as our Saviour said of Judas) that he had never been born. The shorter his life is, the fewer are his sins and the smaller his judgments. But to an elect man, life is a great benefit; for by it he goes from election to glorification, by the way of sanctification. The longer he lives, the more good he doth, to the glory of God, the edification of others, and confirmation of his own salvation; making it sure to himself by wrestling and victory in temptations, and perseverance in well doing.—*William Cowper.*

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*Verse* 18.—"*Open thou mine eyes.*" Who is able to know the secret and hidden things of the Scriptures unless Christ opens his eyes? Certainly, no one; for "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Wherefore, as suppliants, we draw near to him, saying, "*Open thou mine eyes,*" etc. The words of God cannot be kept except they be known; neither can they be known unless the eyes shall be opened,—hence it is written, "*That I may live and keep thy word*"; and then, "*Open thou mine eyes.*"—*Paulus Palanterius.*

*Verse* 18.—"*Open thou mine eyes.*" "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" was the gracious inquiry of the loving Jesus to a poor longing one on earth. "Lord! that I may receive my sight," was the instant answer. So here, in the same spirit, and to the same compassionate and loving Lord, does the Psalmist pray, "*Open thou mine eyes*"; and both in this and the preceding petition, "Deal bountifully with thy servant," we see at once who prompted the prayer.—*Barton Bouchier.*

*Verse* 18.—"*Open thou mine eyes.*" If it be asked, seeing David was a regenerate man, and so illumined already, how is it that he prays for the opening of his eyes? The answer is easy: that our regeneration is wrought by degrees. The beginnings of light in his mind made him long for more; for no man can account of sense, but he who hath it. The light which he had caused him to see his own darkness; and therefore, feeling his wants, he sought to have them supplied by the Lord.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 18.—"*Open thou mine eyes.*" The saints do not complain of the obscurity of the law, but of their own blindness. The Psalmist doth not say, Lord make a plainer law, but, Lord *open mine eyes:* blind men might as well complain of God, that he doth not make a sun whereby they might see. The word is "a light that shineth in a dark place" (2 Pet. i. 19). There is no want of light in the Scripture, but there is a veil of darkness upon our hearts; so that if in this clear light we cannot see, the defect is not in the word, but in ourselves.

The light which they beg is not anything besides the word. When God is said to enlighten us, it is not that we should expect new revelations, but that we may see the wonders in his word, or get a clear sight of what is already revealed. Those that vent their own dreams under the name of the Spirit, and divine light, they do not give you *mysteria*, but *monstra*, portentous opinions; they do not show you the wondrous things of God's law, but the prodigies of their own brain; unhappy abortives, that die as soon as they come to light. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah viii. 20). The light which we have is not without the word, but by the word.

The Hebrew phrase signifieth "*unveil mine eyes.*" There is a double work, negative and positive. There is a taking away of the veil, and an infusion of light. Paul's cure of his natural blindness is a fit emblem of our cure of spiritual blindness: "Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith" (Acts ix. 18). First, the scales fall from our eyes, and then we receive sight.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 18.—The Psalmist asks for no new revelation. It was in God's hand to give this, and he did it in his own time to those ancient believers; but to all of them at every time there was enough given for the purposes of life. The request is not for more, but that he may employ well that which he possesses. Still better does such a form of request suit us, to whom life and immortality have been brought to light in Christ. If we do not find sufficient to exercise our thoughts with constant freshness, and our soul with the grandest and most attractive subjects, it is because we want the eyesight. It is of great importance for us to be persuaded of this truth, that there are many things in the Bible still to be found out, and that, if we come

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in the right spirit, we may be made discoverers of some of them. These things disclose themselves, not so much to learning, though that is not to be despised, as to spiritual sight, to a humble, loving heart.

And this at least is certain, that we shall always find things that are new to *ourselves*. However frequently we traverse the field, we shall perceive some fresh golden vein turning up its glance to us, and we shall wonder how our eyes were formerly holden that we did not see it. It was all there waiting for us, and we feel that more is waiting, if we had the vision. There is a great Spirit in it that holds deeper and even deeper converse with our souls.

This further may be observed, that the Psalmist asks for no new faculty. The eyes are there already, and they need only to be opened. It is not the bestowal of a new and supernatural power which enables a man to read the Bible to profit, but the quickening of a power he already possesses. In one view it is supernatural, as God is the Author of the illumination by a direct act of his Spirit; in another it is natural, as it operates through the faculties existing in a man's soul. God gives "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that the eyes of man's understanding may be enlightened." (Eph. i. 17.) It is important to remember this also, for here lies our responsibility, that we have the faculty, and here also is the point at which we must begin action with the help of God. A man will never grow into the knowledge of God's word by idly waiting for some new gift of discernment, but by diligently using that which God has already bestowed upon him, and using at the same time all other helps that lie within his reach. There are men and books that seem, beyond others, to have the power of aiding insight. All of us have felt it in the contact of some affinity of nature which makes them our best helpers; the kindred clay upon the eyes by which the great Enlightener removes our blindness (John ix. 6). Let us seek for such, and if we find them let us employ them without leaning on them. Above all, let us give our whole mind in patient, loving study to the book itself, and where we fail, at any essential part, God will either send his evangelist Philip to our aid (Acts viii.) or instruct us himself. But it is only to patient, loving study that help is given. God could have poured all knowledge into us by easy inspiration, but it is by earnest search alone that it can become the treasure of the soul.

But if so, it may still be asked what is the meaning of this prayer, and why does the Bible itself insist so often on the indispensable need of the Spirit of God to teach? Now there is a side here as true as the other, and in no way inconsistent with it. If prayer without effort would be presumptuous, effort without prayer would be vain. The great reason why men do not feel the power and beauty of the Bible is a spiritual one. They do not realize the grand evil which the Bible has come to cure, and they have not a heart to the blessings which it offers to bestow. The film of a fallen nature, self-maintained, is upon their eyes while they read: "The eyes of their understanding are darkened, being alienated from the life of God" (Eph. iv. 18). All the natural powers will never find the true key to the Bible, till the thoughts of sin and redemption enter the heart, and are put in the centre of the Book. It is the part of the Father of lights, by the teaching of his Spirit, to give this to the soul, and he will, if it humbly approaches him with this request. Thus we shall study as one might a book with the author at hand, to set forth the height of his argument, or as one might look on a noble composition, when the artist breathes into us a portion of his soul, to let us feel the centre of its harmonies of form and colour. Those who have given to the Bible thought and prayer will own that these are not empty promises.—*John Ker, in a Sermon entitled, "God's Word Suited to Man's Sense of Wonder,"* 1877.

*Verse* 18.—O let us never forget, that the wonderful things contained in the divine law can neither be discovered nor relished by the "natural man,"

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whose powers of perception and enjoyment are limited in their range to the objects of time and sense. It is the divine Spirit alone who can lighten the darkness of our sinful state, and who can enable us to perceive the glory, the harmony, and moral loveliness which everywhere shine forth in the pages of revealed truth.—*John Morison*, 1829.

*Verse* 18.—"*Uncover my eyes and I will look—wonders out of thy law.*" The last clause is a kind of exclamation after his eyes have been uncovered. This figure is often used to denote inspiration or a special divine communication. "*Out of thy law*," *i.e.*, brought out to view, as if from a place of concealment.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verse* 18.—"*Wondrous things.*" Many were the signs and miracles which God wrought in the midst of the people of Israel, which they did not understand. What was the reason? Moses tells us expressly what it was: "Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" (Deut. xxix. 4). They had sensitive eyes and ears, yea, they had a rational heart or mind; but they wanted a spiritual ear to hear, a spiritual heart or mind to apprehend and improve those wonderful works of God; and these they had not, because God had not given them such eyes, ears, and hearts. Wonders without grace cannot open the eyes fully; but grace without wonders can. And as man hath not an eye to see the wonderful works of God spiritually, until it is given; so, much less hath he an eye to see the wonders of the word of God till it be given him from above; and therefore David prays, "*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*" And if the wondrous things of the law are not much seen till God give an eye, then much less are the wondrous things of the Gospel. The light of nature shows us somewhat of the Law; but nothing of the Gospel was ever seen by the light of nature. Many who have seen and admired some excellencies in the Law could never see, and therefore have derided, that which is the excellency of the Gospel, till God had opened their heart to understand.—*Joseph Caryl*, 1602—1673.

*Verse* 18.—"The word is very nigh" unto us; and, holding in our hand a document that teems with what is wonderful, the sole question is, "Have we an eye to its marvels, a heart for its mercies?" Here is the precise use of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit puts nothing new into the Bible; he only so enlightens and strengthens our faculties, that we can discern and admire what is there already. It is not the telescope which draws out that rich sparkling of stars on the blue space, which to the naked eye seem points of light, and untenanted: it is not the microscope which condenses the business of a stirring population into the circumference of a drop of water, and clothes with a thousand tints the scarcely discernible wing of the ephemeral insect. The stars are shining in their glory, whether or no we have the instruments to penetrate the azure; and the tiny tenantry are carrying on their usual concerns, and a rich garniture still forms the covering of the insect, whether or no the powerful lens has turned for us the atom into a world, and transformed the almost imperceptible down into the sparkling plumage of the bird of paradise. Thus the wonderful things are already in the Bible. The Spirit who indited them at first brings them not as new revelations to the individual; but, by removing the mists of carnal prejudice, by taking away the scales of pride and self-sufficiency, and by rectifying the will, which causes the judgment to look at truth through a distorted medium,—by influencing the heart, so that the affections shall no longer blind the understanding,—by these and other modes, which might be easily enumerated, the Holy Ghost enables men to recognize what is hid, to perceive beauty and to discover splendour where all before had appeared without form and comeliness; and thus brings round the result of the Bible, in putting on the lip the wonderful prayer which he had himself inspired: "*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*"—*Henry Melvill*, 1798—1871.

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*Verse* 18.—The "*wondrous things*" seem to be the great things of an eternal world—he had turned his enquiring eyes upon the wonders of nature, sun, moon, and stars, mountains, trees, and rivers. He had seen many of the wonders of art; but now, he wanted to see the spiritual wonders contained in the Bible. He wanted to know about God himself in all his majesty, purity, and grace. He wanted to learn the way of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, and the glory that is to follow.

"*Open mine eyes.*"—David was not blind—his eye was not dim. He could read the Bible from end to end, and yet he felt that he needed more light. He felt that he needed to see deeper, to have the eyes of his understanding opened. He felt that if he had nothing but his own eyes and natural understanding, he would not discover the wonders which he panted to see. He wanted divine teaching—the eye-salve of the Spirit; and therefore he would not open the Bible without this prayer, "*Open thou mine eyes.*"—*Robert Murray M'Cheyne*, 1813–1843.

*Verse* 18.—"*Wondrous things.*" Wherefore useth he this word "*wondrous*"? It is as if he would have said, Although the world taketh the law of God to be but a light thing, and it seemeth to be given but as it were for simple souls and young children; yet for all that there seemeth such a wisdom to be in it, as that it surmounteth all the wisdom of the world, and that therein lie hid wonderful secrets.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 18.—"*Thy law.*" That which is the *object* of the understanding prayed for, that in the knowledge whereof the Psalmist would be illuminated, is תּוֹרָה. The word signifies instruction; and being referred unto God, it is his teaching or instruction of us by the revelation of himself, the same which we intend by the Scripture. When the books of the Old Testament were completed they were, for distinction's sake, distributed into תּוֹרָה, כְּתוּבִים, and נְבִיאִים, or the "Law," the "Psalms," and the "Prophets," Luke xxiv. 44. Under that distribution *Torah* signifies the five books of Moses. But whereas these books of Moses were, as it were, the foundation of all future revelations under the Old Testament, which were given in the explication thereof, all the writings of it were usually called "the Law," Isaiah viii. 20. By the *law*, therefore, in this place, the Psalmist understands all the books that were then given unto the church by revelation for the rule of its faith and obedience. And that by the *law*, in the psalms, the written law is intended, is evident from the first of them, wherein he is declared blessed who "meditateth therein day and night," Ps. i. 2; which hath respect unto the command of reading and meditating on the *books thereof* in that manner, Josh. i. 8. That, therefore, which is intended by this word is the entire revelation of the will of God, given unto the church for the rule of its faith and obedience—that is, the holy Scripture.

In this law there are נִפְלָאוֹת "*wonderful things.*" פָּלָא signifies to be "wonderful," to be "hidden," to be "great" and "high;" that which men by the use of reason cannot attain unto or understand (hence נִפְלָאוֹת are things that have such an impression of divine wisdom and power upon them as that they are justly the object of our admiration); that which is too hard for us; as Deut. xvii. 8, כִּי יִפָּלֵא מִמְּךָ דָבָר—"If a matter be too hard for thee," hid from thee. And it is the name whereby the miraculous works of God are expressed, Ps. lxxvii. 11, lxxviii. 11. Wherefore, these "wonderful things of the law" are those expressions and effects of divine wisdom in the Scripture which are above the natural reason and understanding of men to find out and comprehend. Such are the mysteries of divine truth in the Scripture, especially because Christ is in them, whose name is "Wonderful," Isa. ix. 6; for all the great and marvellous effects of infinite wisdom meet in him.—*John Owen*, 1616—1683.

*Verse* 18.—"*Wondrous things.*" There are promises in God's word that no man has ever tried to find. There are treasures of gold and silver in it that

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no man has taken the pains to dig for. There are medicines in it for the want of a knowledge of which hundreds have died. It seems to me like some old baronial estate that has descended to a man who lives in a modern house, and thinks it scarcely worth while to go and look into the venerable mansion. Year after year passes away and he pays no attention to it, since he has no suspicion of the valuable treasures it contains, till, at last, some man says to him, "Have you been up in the country to look at that estate?" He makes up his mind that he will take a look at it. As he goes through the porch he is surprised to see the skill that has been displayed in its construction: he is more and more surprised as he goes through the halls. He enters a large room, and is astonished as he beholds the wealth of pictures on the walls, among which are portraits of many of his revered ancestors. He stands in amazement before them. There is a Titian, there a Raphael, there is a Correggio, and there is a Giorgione. He says, "I never had any idea of these before." "Ah," says the steward, "there is many another thing that you know nothing about in the castle," and he takes him from room to room and shows carved plate, and wonderful statues, and the man exclaims, "Here I have been for a score of years the owner of this estate, and have never before known what things were in it." But no architect ever conceived of such an estate as God's word, and no artist, or carver, or sculptor, ever conceived of such pictures, and carved dishes, and statues as adorn its apartments. It contains treasures that silver, and gold, and precious stones are not to be mentioned with.—*Henry Ward Beecher*, 1872.

*Verse* 18.—"*That I may behold wondrous things.*" The great end of the Word of God in the Psalmist's time, as now, was practical; but there is a secondary use here referred to, which is worthy of consideration,—its power of meeting man's faculty of wonder. God knows our frame, for he made it, and he must have adapted the Bible to all its parts. If we can show this, it may be another token that the book comes from Him who made man . . . . That God has bestowed upon man the faculty of wonder we all know. It is one of the first and most constant emotions in our nature. We can see this in children, and in all whose feelings are still fresh and natural. It is the parent of the desire to know, and all through life it is urging men to enquire.—*John Ker.*

*Verse* 18.—"*Wondrous things out of thy law.*" In cxviii. we had the "wondrous" character of redemption; in cxix. we have the "wonders" (verses 18, 27, 129), of God's revelation.—*William Kay*, 1871.

*Verses* 18, 19.—When I cannot have Moses to tell me the meaning, saith Saint Augustine, give me that Spirit that thou gavest to Moses. And this is that which every man that will understand must pray for: this David prayed for;—"*Open thou mine eyes that I may see the wonders of the Law;*" and (verse 19) "*hide not thy commandments from me.*" And Christ saith, "If you, being evil, can give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" So that then we shall see the secrets of God.—*Richard Stock*, (—1626).

*Verse* 19.—"*I am a stranger in the earth.*" David had experience of peace and war, of riches and poverty, of pleasure and woe. He had been a private and public person; a shepherd, a painful calling; a soldier, a bloody trade; a courtier, an honourable slavery, which joineth together in one the lord and the parasite, the gentleman and the drudge; and he was a king,—a glorious name, filled up with fears and cares. All these he had passed through, and found least rest when he was at the highest, less content on the throne than in the sheepfolds. All this he had observed and laid up in his memory, and this his confession is an epitome and brief of all; and in effect he telleth us, that whatsoever he had seen in this his passage, whatsoever he had enjoyed, yet he found nothing so certain as this,—that

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he had found nothing certain, nothing that he could abide with or would abide with him, but that he was still as a passenger and "*stranger in the earth.*"—*Anthony Farindon*, 1596—1658.

*Verse* 19.—"*I am a stranger in the earth,*" etc. As a sojourner, he hath renounced the world, which is therefore become his enemy; as "*a stranger*" he is fearful of losing his way; on these accounts he requesteth that God would compensate the loss of earthly comforts by affording the light of heaven; that he would not "*hide his commandments,*" but show and teach him those steps, by which he may ascend toward heaven, rejoicing in hope of future glory.—*George Horne*, 1730—1792.

*Verse* 19.—"*I am a stranger in the earth.*" This confession from a solitary wanderer would have had little comparative meaning; but in the mouth of one who was probably surrounded with every source of worldly enjoyment, it shows at once the vanity of "earth's best joys," and the heavenly tendency of the religion of the Bible.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 19.—"*I am a stranger in the earth,*" etc. 1. Every man here upon earth (especially a godly man) is but a stranger and a passenger. 2. It concerns him that is a stranger to look after a better and a more durable state. Every man should do so. A man's greatest care should be for that place where he lives longest; therefore eternity should be his scope. A godly man will do so. Those whose hearts are not set upon earthly things, they must have heaven. The more their affections are estranged from the one, the more they are taken up about the other (Col. iii. 2); heaven and earth are like two scales in a balance, that which is taken from the one is put into the other. 3. There is no sufficient direction how to obtain this durable estate, but in the word of God. Without this we are but like poor pilgrims and wayfaring men in a strange country, not able to discern the way home. A blessed state is only sufficiently revealed in the word: "Life and immortality is brought to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). The heathens did but guess at it, and had some obscure sense of an estate after this life; but as it is brought to light with most clearness in the word, so the way thither is only pointed out by the word. It is the word of God makes us wise to salvation, and which is our line and rule to heavenly Canaan; and therefore it concerns those that look after this durable state to consult with the word. 4. There is no understanding God's word but by the light of the Spirit. "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job xxxii. 8). Though the word have light in it, yet the spirit of man cannot move till God enlightens us with that lively light that makes way for the dominion of the truth in our hearts, and conveyeth influence into our hearts. This is the light David begs when he says, "*Hide not thy commandments from me.*" David was not ignorant of the Ten Commandments, of their sound; but he begs their spiritual sense and use. 5. If we would have the Spirit we must ask it of God in prayer; for God gives the "Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke xi. 13); and therefore we must say, as David, "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me: let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles" (Ps. xliii. 33).—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 19.—"*I am a stranger in the earth,*" etc. When a child is born, it is spoken of sometimes under the designation of "a little stranger!" Friends calling will ask if, as a privilege, they may "see the little stranger." A stranger, indeed! come from far. From the immensities. From the presence, and touch, and being of God! And going—into the immensities again—into, and through all the unreckonable ages of duration.

But the little stranger grows, and in a while begins to take vigorous root. He works, and wins, and builds, and plants, and buys, and holds, and, in his own feeling, becomes so "settled" that he would be almost amused with anyone who should describe him as a stranger now.

And still life goes on, deepening and widening in its flow, and holding in

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itself manifold and still multiplying elements of interest. Increasingly the man is caught by these—like a ship, from which many anchors are cast into the sea. He strives among the struggling, rejoices with the gay, feels the spur of honour, enters the race of acquisition, does some hard and many kindly things by turns; multiplies his engagements, his relationships, his friends, and then—just when after such preparations, life ought to be fully beginning, and opening itself out into a great restful, sunny plain—lo! the shadows begin to fall, which tell, too surely, that it is drawing fast to a close. The voice, which, soon or late, everyone must hear, is calling for "the little stranger," who was born not long ago, whose first lesson is over, and who is wanted now to enter by the door called death, into another school. And the stranger is not ready. He has thrown out so many anchors, and they have taken such a fast hold of the ground that it will be no slight matter to raise them. He is *settled*. He has no pilgrim's staff at hand; and his eye, familiar enough with surrounding things, is not accustomed to the onward and ascending way, cannot so well measure the mountain altitude, or reckon the far distance. The progress of time has been much swifter than the progress of his thought. Alas! he has made one long mistake. He has "looked at the things which are seen," and forgotten the things which are not seen. And "the things which are seen" are temporal, and go with time into extinction; while "those which are not seen, are eternal." And so there is hurry, and confusion, and distress in the last hours, and in the going away. Now, all this may be obviated and escaped, thoroughly, if a man will but say—"*I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.*"—*Alexander Raleigh, in "The Little Sanctuary, and other Meditations."* 1872.

*Verse* 19.—"*I am a stranger in the earth,*" etc. In the law, God recommends strangers to the care and compassion of his people; now David returns the arguments to him, to persuade him to deal kindly with him.—*Robert Leighton*, 1611—1684.

*Verse* 19.—"*In the earth.*" He makes no exception here; the whole earth he acknowledged a place of his pilgrimage. Not only when he was banished among the Moabites and Philistines was he a stranger; but even when he lived peaceably at home in Canaan, still he thinks himself a stranger. This consideration moved godly Basil to despise the threatening of Modestus, the deputy of Valens the emperor, when he braved him with banishment. *Ab exilii metu liber sum, unam hominum cognoscens esse patriam, paradisum, omnem autem terram commune naturæ exilium.* And it shall move us to keep spiritual sobriety in the midst of pleasures, if we remember that in our houses, at our own fireside, and in our own beds, we are but strangers, from which we must shortly remove, to give place to others.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 19.—"*Hide not thy commandments from me.*" The manner of David's reasoning is this. I am here a stranger and I know not the way, therefore, Lord, direct me. The similitude is taken from passengers, who coming to an uncouth country where they are ignorant of the way, seek the benefit of a guide. But the dissimilitude is here: in any country people can guide a stranger to the place where he would be; but the dwellers of the earth cannot show the way to heaven; and therefore David seeks no guide among them, but prays the Lord to direct him.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 19.—"*Hide not thy commandments from me.*" There is a hiding of the word of God when means to hear it explained by preachers are wanting; and there is a hiding of the comfortable and lively light of the Spirit, who must quicken the word into us. From both those evils we may, and we should, pray to be saved.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 20.—"*My soul breaketh,*" etc. Here is a protestation of that earnest desire he had to the obedience of the word of God; he amplifies it two ways: first, it was no light motion, but such as being deeply rooted made his heart

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to *break* when he saw that he could not do in the obedience thereof what he would. Next, it was no vanishing motion, like the morning dew; but it was permanent, *omni tempore*, he had it *at all times.*—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 20.—"*My soul breaketh for the longing,*" as one that with straining breaks a vein.—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse* 20.—"*My soul breaketh,*" etc. This breaking is by rubbing, chafing, or crushing. The spirit was so *fretted* with its yearning desire after the things which Jehovah had spóken, that it was broken as by heavy friction. The "*longing*" to find out and follow the hidden wonders was almost unbearable. This *longing* continued with the Psalmist "*at all times,*" or "in every season." Prosperity could not make him forget it; adversity could not quench it. In sickness or health, in happiness or sadness, in company or alone, nothing overcame that *longing*. "*The wondrous things*" were so wonderful, and still so hidden. To see a little of "the beauty of the Lord" is to get to know how much there is which we fail to see, and thus to *long* more than ever. He who pursues ardently the wonders of the word of the Lord, will never set that *longing* at rest as long as he remains "in the earth." It is only when we shall "be like him," and "shall see him as he is," that we shall cry, "Enough, Lord!" "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness."—*F. G. Marchant.*

*Verse* 20.—"*My soul breaketh for the longing.*" For the earnest desire. "That it hath *unto thy judgments at all times.*" Thy law; thy commands. This was a constant feeling. It was not fitful, or spasmodic. It was the steady, habitual state of the soul on the subject. He had never seen enough of the beauty and glory of the law of God to feel that all the wants of his nature were satisfied, or that he could see and know no more; he had seen and felt enough to excite in him an ardent desire to be made fully acquainted with *all* that there is in the law of God.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 20.—"*My soul breaketh for the longing,*" etc. The desire after God's appointments becomes painfully intense. A longing—an intense longing—for the judgments of the Lord—at all times. These are the particulars of his breaking soul. His whole mind is toward the things of God. He prays that he may behold the wondrous things of Jehovah's law, and that he may not hide his commandments from him; and here his soul breaks for longing towards his judgments at all times. The state of the Psalmist's mind would not lead us here to suppose that he was awaiting the manifestation of the Lord's judgments in vindicating his cause against ungodly men, or that he was longing for opportunity of fulfilling all the deeds of righteousness towards his fellow-men; for this he was doing to the utmost. Evidently he is intent upon the ordinances of religion, which were called "*judgments*" in reference to the solemn sanctions with which they were enjoined. The man of God so longed to join with the Lord's people in these, that his heart was ready to break with desire, as he was forced from place to place in the wilderness. The renewed heart is here. Another might long to be delivered from persecution, to be at rest, to be restored to hóme, relations, and comfort. The man of God could not but desire those natural enjoyments; but, over all, his holy mind longed with ardour for the celebration of Jehovah's worship. —*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 20.—"*Thy judgments.*" God's judgments are of two sorts: first, his commands; so called because by them right is judged and discerned from wrong. Next, his plagues executed upon transgressors according to his word. David here refers to the first. Let men who have not the like of David's desire, remember, that they whose heart cannot break for transgressing God's word because they love it, shall find the plagues of God to bruise their body and break their heart also. Let us delight in the first sort of these judgments, and the second shall never come upon us.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 20.—Mark that word, "*at all times.*" Bad men have their good

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moods, as good men have their bad moods. A bad man may, under gripes of conscience, a smarting rod, the approaches of death, or the fears of hell, or when he is sermon sick, cry out to the Lord for grace, for righteousness, for holiness; but he is the only blessed man that hungers and thirsts after righteousness at all times.—*Thomas Brooks*, 1608—1680.

*Verse* 20.—"*At all times.*" Some prize the word in adversity, when they have no other comfort to live upon; then they can be content to study the word to comfort them in their distresses; but when they are well at ease, they despise it. But David made use of it "*at all times;*" in prosperity, to humble him; in adversity, to comfort him; in the one, to keep him from pride; in the other, to keep him from despair; in affliction, the word was his cordial; in worldly increase, it was his antidote; and so at all times his heart was carried out to the word either for one necessity or another.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 20.—"*At all times.*" How few are there even among the servants of God who know anything of the intense feeling of devotion here expressed! O that our cold and stubborn hearts were warmed and subdued by divine grace, that we might be ready to faint by reason of the longing which we had "*at all times*" for the judgments of our God. How fitful are our best feelings! If to-day we ascend the mount of communion with God, to-morrow we are in danger of being again entangled with the things of earth. How happy are they whose hearts are "*at all times*" filled with longings after fellowship with the great and glorious object of their love!—*John Morison*, 1829.

*Verse* 20.—If you read the lives of good men, who have been, also, intellectually great, you will be struck, I think, even to surprise, a surprise, however, which will not be unpleasant, to find them, at the close of life, in their own estimation so ignorant, so utterly imperfect, so little the better of the long life-lesson. Dr. Chalmers, after kindling churches and arousing nations to their duties, summed up his own attainments in the word "desirousness," and took as the text that best described his inner state, that passionate, almost painful cry of David, "*My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments.*" But how grand was the attainment! To be in old age as simple as a little child before God! To be still learning at threescore years and ten! How beautiful seem the great men in their simplicity!—*Alexander Raleigh, in* "*The Little Sanctuary*," 1872.

*Verse* 21.—"*Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed.*" If the proud escape here, as sometimes they do, hereafter they shall not; for, "*the proud man is an abomination to the Lord*"; Prov. xvi. 5. *God cannot endure him;* Ps. ci. 5. And what of that? *Tu perdes superbos*, Thou shalt destroy the proud. The very heathens devised the proud giants struck with thunder from heaven. And *if God spared not the angels*, whom he placed in the highest heavens, *but* for their pride *threw them down headlong to the nethermost hell*, how much less shall he spare the proud dust and ashes of the sons of men, but shall cast them from the height of their earthly altitude to the bottom of that infernal dungeon! "Humility makes men angels; pride makes angels devils"; as that father said: I may well add, makes devils of men. Αλαζονείας οὔτις εκφευγει δικήν, says the heathen poet, Menander; "Never soul escaped the revenge of pride," never shall escape it. So sure as God is just, pride shall not go unpunished. I know now we are all ready to call for a bason, with Pilate, and to wash our hands from this foul sin. Honourable and beloved, this vice is a close one; it will cleave fast to you; yea, so close that ye can hardly discern it from a piece of yourselves: this is it that aggravates the danger of it. For, as Aquinas notes well, some sins are more dangerous *propter vehementiam impugnationis*, "for the fury of their assault"; as the sin of anger: others for their correspondence to nature; as the sins of lust: others, *propter latentiam sui*, "for their close skulking" in

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our bosom; as the sin of pride. Oh, let us look seriously into the corners of our false hearts, even with the lanthorn of God's law, and find out this subtle devil; and never give peace to our souls till we have dispossessed him. Down with your proud plumes, O ye glorious peacocks of the world: look upon your black legs, and your snake-like head: be ashamed of your miserable infirmities: else, God will down with them and yourselves in a fearful vengeance. There is not the holiest of us but is this way faulty: oh, let us be humbled by our repentance, that we may not be brought down to everlasting confusion: let us be cast down upon our knees, that we may not be cast down upon our faces. For God will make good his own word, one way; "A man's pride shall bring him low."—*Joseph Hall*, 1574—1656.

*Verse* 21.—"*Thou hast rebuked the proud.*" Let the histories of Cain, Pharaoh, Haman, Nebuchadnezzar, and Herod, exhibit the proud under the rebuke and curse of God. He abhors their persons and their offerings: he "knows them afar off": he "resisteth them": "he scattereth them in the imaginations of their hearts." Yet more especially hateful are they in his sight, when cloaking themselves under a spiritual garb,—"which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me: for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." David and Hezekiah are instructive beacons in the church, that God's people, whenever they give place to the workings of a proud heart, must not hope to escape his rebuke. "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions:" Ps. xcix. 8.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 21.—"*Thou hast rebuked the proud.*" David addeth another reason whereby he is more enflamed to pray unto God and to address himself unto him to be taught in his word; to wit, when he seeth that he hath so, "*rebuked the proud.*" For the chastisements and punishments which God layeth upon the faithless and rebellious should be a good instruction for us; as it is said that God hath executed judgment, and that the inhabitants of the land should learn his righteousness. It is not without cause that the prophet Isaiah also hath so said; for he signifieth unto us that God hath by divers and sundry means drawn us unto him, and that chiefly when he teacheth us to fear his majesty. For without it, alas, we shall soon become like unto brute beasts: if God lay the bridle on our necks, what license we will give unto ourselves experience very well teacheth us. Now God seeing that we are so easily brought to run at random, sendeth us examples, because he would bring us to walk in fear and carefully.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 21.—"*The proud.*" This is a style commonly given to the wicked; because as it is our oldest evil, so is it the strongest and first that strives in our corrupt nature to carry men to transgress the bounds appointed by the Lord. From the time that pride entered into Adam's heart, that he would be higher than God had made him, he spared not to eat of the forbidden tree. And what else is the cause of all transgression, but that man's ignorant pride will have his will preferred to the will of God.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 21.—"*The proud.*" Peter speaks of the proud, as if they did challenge God like champions, and provoke him like rebels, so that unless he did resist them, they would go about to deprive him of his rule, as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram undermined Moses. Num. xvi.

For so the proud man saith, I will be like the highest, Isaiah xiv., and, if he could, above the highest too. This is the creature that was taken out of the dust, Gen. ii. 7, and so soon as he was made, he opposed himself against that majesty which the angels adore, the thrones worship, the devils fear, and the heavens obey. How many sins are in this sinful world! and yet, as Solomon saith of the good wife, Prov. xxxi. 29, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou surmountest them all"; so may I say of pride, many sins have done wickedly, but thou surmountest them all; for the wrathful man, the prodigal man, the lascivious man, the surfeiting man,

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the slothful man, is rather an enemy to himself than to God; but the proud man sets himself against God, because he doth against his laws; he maketh himself equal with God, because he doth all without God, and craves no help of him; he exalteth himself above God, because he will have his own will though it be contrary to God's will. As the humble man saith, Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give the glory, Ps. cxv. i.; so the proud man saith, Not unto Him, not unto Him, but unto us give the glory. Like unto Herod which took the name of God, and was honoured of all but the worms, and they showed that he was not a god, but a man, Acts xii. 21. Therefore proud men may be called God's enemies, because as the covetous pull riches from men, so the proud pull honour from God. Beside, the proud man hath no cause to be proud, as other sinners have; the covetous for riches, the ambitious for honour, the voluptuous for pleasure, the envious for wrong, the slothful for ease; but the proud man hath no cause to be proud, but pride itself, which saith, like Pharaoh, "I will not obey," Exod. v. 2.—*Henry Smith*, 1560—1591.

*Verse* 21.—"*Proud that are cursed.*"—Proud men endure the curse of never having friends; not in prosperity, because they know nobody; not in adversity, because then nobody knows them.—*John Whitecross, in "Anecdotes illustrative of the Old Testament."*

*Verse* 21.—This use of God's judgments upon others must we make to ourselves; first, that we may be brought to acknowledge our deserts, and so may fear; and, next, that we may so behold his justice upon the proud that we may have assurance of his mercy to the humble. This is hard to flesh and blood; for some can be brought to rejoice at the destruction of others, and cannot fear; and others, when they are made to fear, cannot receive comfort. But those which God hath joined together let us not separate: therefore let us make these uses of God's judgments.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 22.—"*Remove from me reproach and contempt.*" Here David prays against the reproach and contempt of men; that they might be *removed*, or, as the word is, *rolled from off him.* This intimates that they lay upon him, and neither his greatness nor his goodness could secure him from being libelled and lampooned: some despised him and endeavoured to make him mean, others reproached him and endeavoured to make him odious. It has often been the lot of those that do well to be ill spoken of. It intimates, that this burden lay heavy upon him. Hard words indeed and foul words break no bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit: therefore David prays, Lord, "*remove*" them from me, that I may not be thereby either driven from any duty, or discouraged in it.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 22.—"*Remove from me reproach and contempt,*" etc. In the words (as in most of the other verses) you have,—1. A request: "*Remove from me reproach and contempt.*" 2. A reason and argument to enforce the request: "*For I have kept thy testimonies.*"

First, for the request, "*Remove from me reproach and contempt*"; the word signifies, Roll from upon me, let it not come at me, or let it not stay with me. And then the argument: "*for I have kept thy testimonies.*" The reason may be either thus: (1.) He pleads that he was innocent of what was charged upon him, and had not deserved those aspersions. (2.) He intimates that it was for his obedience, for this very cause, that he had kept the word, therefore was reproach rolled upon him. (3.) It may be conceived thus, that his respect to God's word was not abated by this reproach, he still kept God's testimonies, how wicked soever he did appear in the eyes of the world. It is either an assertion of his innocency, or he shows the ground why this reproach came upon him, or he pleads that his respect to God and his service was not lessened, whatever reproach he met with in the performance of it.



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The points from hence are many. 1. It is no strange thing that they which keep God's testimonies should be slandered and reproached. 2. As it is the usual lot of God's people to be reproached; so it is very grievous to them, and heavy to bear. 3. It being grievous, we may lawfully seek the removal of it. So doth David, and so may we, with submission to God's will. 4. In removal of it, it is best to deal with God about it; for God is the great witness of our sincerity, as knowing all things, and so to be appealed to in the case. Again, God is the most powerful asserter of our innocency; he hath the hearts and tongues of men in his own hands, and can either prevent the slanderer from uttering reproach, or the hearer from the entertainment of the reproach. He that hath such power over the consciences of men can clear up our innocency; therefore it is best to deal with God about it; and prayer many times proves a better vindication than an apology. 5. In seeking relief with God from this evil, it is a great comfort and ground of confidence when we are innocent of what is charged. In some cases we must humble ourselves, and then God will take care for our credit; we must plead guilty when, by our own fault, we have given occasion to the slanders of the wicked: so, "Turn away my reproach, which I fear: for thy judgments are good" (Ps. cxix. 39). "My reproach," for it was in part deserved by himself, and therefore he feared the sad consequences of it, and humbled himself before God. But at other times we may stand upon our integrity, as David saith here: "*Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 23.—"*Princes also did sit,*" under the shadow of justice, "*and speak against me.*" Now this was a great temptation to David, that he was not only mocked and scorned at the taverns and inns, being there blazoned by dissolute jesters and scoffers, and talked of in the streets and market-places; but even in the place of justice (which ought to be holy); it could not therefore be chosen but that they also would utterly defame and slander him, and condemn him to be, as it were, a most wicked and cursed man. When David then did see that he was thus unjustly entreated and handled, he maketh his complaint unto God, and sayeth, "O Lord, the princes and governors themselves do sit and speak evil against me; *and yet for all that I have kept thy testimonies.*" Here in sum we are to gather out of this place, that if it so fall out, when we have walked uprightly and in a good conscience, that we are falsely slandered, and accused of this and that whereof we never once thought; yet ought we to bear all things patiently; for let us be sure of that, that we are not better than David, whatever great protestation of our integrity and purity we may dare to make.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 23 —"*But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*" As husbandmen, when their ground is overflowed by waters, make ditches and water-furrows to carry it away; so, when our minds and thoughts are overwhelmed with trouble, it is good to divert them to some other matter. But every diversion will not become saints, it must be a holy diversion: "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul" (Psalm xciv. 19). The case was the same with that of the text, when the throne of iniquity frameth mischief by a law; as you shall see here, when he had many perplexed thoughts about the abuse of power against himself. But now where lay his ease in diversion? Would every diversion suit his purpose? No; "*Thy* comforts,"—comforts of God's allowance, of God's providing, comforts proper to saints. Wicked men in trouble run to their pot and pipe, and games and sports, and merry company, and so defeat the providence rather than improve it: but David, who was God's servant, must have God's comforts. So, elsewhere, when his thoughts were troubled about the power of the wicked: "I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end" (Psalm lxxiii. 17). He goeth to divert his mind by the

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use of God's ordinances, and so cometh to be settled against the temptation. —*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 23.—"*But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*"—Perceive here the armour by which David fights against his enemy. *Arma justi quibus omnes adversariorum repellit impetus*, his weapons are the word and prayer. He renders not injury for injury, reproach for reproach. It is dangerous to fight against Satan or his instruments with their own weapons; for so they shall easily overcome us. Let us fight with the armour of God—the exercises of the word and prayer: for a man may peaceably rest in his secret chamber, and in these two see the miserable end of all those who are enemies to God's children for God's sake.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 23.—"*Thy statutes.*" It is impossible to live either *Christianly* or *comfortable* without the daily use of Scripture. It is absolutely necessary for our direction in all our ways before we begin them, and when we have ended them, for the warrant of our approbation of them, for resolving of our doubts, and comforting us in our griefs. Without it our conscience is a blind guide, and leadeth us in a mist of ignorance, error, and confusion. Therein we hear God speaking to us, declaring his good will to us concerning our salvation, and the way of our obedience to meet him in his good will. What book can we read with such profit and comfort? For matter, it is wisdom: for authority, it is divine and absolute: for majesty, God himself under common words and letters expressing an unspeakable power to stamp our heart. Where shall we find our minds so enlightened, our hearts so deeply affected, our conscience so moved, both for casting us down and raising us up? I cannot find in all the books of the world, such an one speak to me, as in Scripture, with so absolute a conquest of all the powers of my soul.

Contemners of Scripture lack food for their souls, light for their life, and weapons for their spiritual warfare; but the lovers of Scripture have all that furniture. Therein we hear the voice of our Beloved, we smell the savour of his ointments, and have daily access unto the ark of propitiation. If in our knowledge we desire divinity, excellency, antiquity, and efficiency, we cannot find it, but in God's word alone. It is the extract of heavenly wisdom, which Christ the eternal Word brought out of the bosom of his Father.—*William Struther*, 1638.

*Verses* 23, 24.—The two last verses of this section contain two protestations of David's honest affection to the word. The first is, that albeit he was persecuted and evil spoken of, and that by great and honourable men of the world, such as Saul, and Abner, and Ahithophel; yet did he still meditate in the statutes of God. It is a hard temptation when the godly are troubled by any wicked men; but much harder when they are troubled by men of honour and authority. And that, first, by reason of their *place:* the greater *power* they have, the greater *peril* to encounter with their displeasure; therefore said Solomon, "The wrath of a king is as messengers of death." Next, because authorities and powers are ordained by God, not for the terror of the good, but of the evil: Rom. xiii. 3. And therefore it is no small grief to the godly, when they find them abused to a contrary end: that where a ruler should be to good men like rain to the fields new mown, he becomes a favourer of evil men and a persecutor of the good. Then justice is turned into wormwood; that which should bring comfort to such as fear God, is abused to oppress them. And therefore it should be accounted a great benefit of God, when he gives a people good and religious rulers.—*William Cowper.*

*Verses* 23, 51.—If the 119th Psalm came from the pen of David, as multitudes believe, then I do not wonder that many have connected its composition with his residence in the school of the prophets at Naioth. The calm in which he then found himself, and the studies which he then prosecuted, might well have led his musings in the direction of that

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alphabetic code, while there are in it not a few expressions which, to say the least, may have particular reference to the dangers out of which he had so recently escaped, and by which he was still threatened. Such, for example, are the following: "*Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*" "*The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law.*"—*William M. Taylor, in "David, King of Israel; his Life and its Lessons."* 1880.

*Verse* 24.—"*Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.*" His delight and his counsellors, that is, his delight *because* his counsellors; his counsellors, and therefore his delight. We know how delightful it is to any to have the advantage of good counsel, according to the perplexities and distractions in which they may be. "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel," says Solomon, Prov. xxvii. 9. Now this is the sweetness of Divine communion, and of meditation on God and his word; it employs a man with *seasonable counsel*, which is a very great refreshment to us.—*T. Horton*, 1678.

*Verse* 24.—"*Thy testimonies also are my delight,*" etc. Those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight, must make them for their counsellors and be advised by them: and let those that take them for their counsellors in close walking, take them for their delight in comfortable walking.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 24.—"*Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.*" What could we want more in a time of difficulty than comfort and direction? David had both these blessings. As the fruit of his "meditation in the Lord's statutes," in his distress they were his "*delight*"; in his seasons of perplexity they were his "*counsellors*," directing his behaviour in the perfect way.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 24.—"*My counsellors.*" In the Hebrew it is, "the men of my counsel," which is fitly mentioned, for he had spoken of princes sitting in council against him. Princes do nothing without the advice of their Privy-Council; a child of God hath also his Privy-Council, God's testimonies. On the one side there was Saul and his nobles and counsellors; on the other side there was David and God's testimonies. Now, who was better furnished, think you, they to persecute and trouble him, or David how to carry himself under this trouble? Alphonsus, king of Arragon, being asked who were the best counsellors? answered, "The dead (meaning books), which cannot flatter, but do without partiality declare the truth." Now of all such dead counsellors, God's testimonies have the pre-eminence. A poor, godly man, even then when he is deserted of all, and hath nobody to plead for him, he hath his senate, and his council of state about him, the prophets and apostles, and "other holy men of God, that spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." A man so furnished, is never less alone than when alone; for he hath counsellors about him that tell him what is to be believed or done; and they are such counsellors as cannot err, as will not flatter him, nor applaud him in any sin, nor discourage or dissuade him from that which is good, whatever hazard it expose him to. And truly, if we be wise, we should choose such counsellors as these: "*Thy testimonies are the men of my counsel.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 24.—"*My counsellors.*" See here a sentence worthy to be weighed of us, when David calleth the commandments of God his "*counsellors.*" For, in the first place, he meaneth that he might scorn all the wisdom of the most able and most expert men in the world, since he was conducted by the word of God, and governed thereby. In the second place, he meaneth that when he shall be so governed by the word of God, he would not only be truly wise, but that it would be as if he had all the wisdom of all the men in the world, yea, and a great deal more.—*John Calvin.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 25 TO 32.

MY soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

26 I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.

27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

28 My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

29 Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.

30 I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid *before me.*

31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.

32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

Here, it seems to me, we have the Psalmist in trouble bewailing the bondage to earthly things in which he finds his mind to be held. His soul cleaves to the dust, melts for heaviness, and cries for enlargement from its spiritual prison. In these verses we shall see the influence of the divine word upon a heart which laments its downward tendencies, and is filled with mourning because of its deadening surroundings. The word of the Lord evidently arouses prayer (25—29), confirms choice (30), and inspires renewed resolve (32): it is in all tribulation whether of body or mind the surest source of help.

This portion has D for its alphabetical letter: it sings of Depression, in the spirit of Devotion, Determination, and Dependence.

25. "*My soul cleaveth unto the dust.*" He means in part that he was full of sorrow; for mourners in the east cast dust on their heads, and sat in ashes, and the Psalmist felt as if these ensigns of woe were glued to him, and his very soul was made to cleave to them because of his powerlessness to rise above his grief. Does he not also mean that he felt ready to die? Did he not feel his life absorbed and fast held by the grave's mould, half choked by the death-dust? It may not be straining the language if we conceive that he also felt and bemoaned his earthly-mindedness and spiritual deadness. There was a tendency in his soul to cling to earth which he greatly bewailed. Whatever was the cause of his complaint, it was no surface evil, but an affair of his inmost spirit; his *soul* cleaved to the dust; and it was not a casual and accidental falling into the dust, but a continuous and powerful tendency, or *cleaving* to the earth. But what a mercy that the good man could feel and deplore whatever there was of evil in the cleaving! The serpent's seed can find their meat in the dust, but never shall the seed of the woman be thus degraded. Many are of the earth earthy, and never lament it; only the heaven-born and heaven-soaring spirit pines at the thought of being fastened to this world, and bird-limed by its sorrows or its pleasures.

"*Quicken thou me according to thy word.*" More life is the cure for all our ailments. Only the Lord can give it. He can bestow it, bestow it at once, and do it according to his word, without departing from the usual course of his grace, as we see it mapped out in the Scriptures. It is well to know what to pray for,—David seeks quickening: one would have thought that

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he would have asked for comfort or upraising, but he knew that these would come out of increased life, and therefore he sought that blessing which is the root of the rest. When a person is depressed in spirit, weak, and bent towards the ground, the main thing is to increase his stamina and put more life into him; then his spirit revives, and his body becomes erect. In reviving the life, the whole man is renewed. Shaking off the dust is a little thing by itself, but when it follows upon quickening, it is a blessing of the greatest value; just as good spirits which flow from established health are among the choicest of our mercies. The phrase, "according to thy word," means,—according to thy revealed way of quickening thy saints. The word of God shows us that he who first made us must keep us alive, and it tells us of the Spirit of God who through the ordinances pours fresh life into our souls; we beg the Lord to act towards us in this his own regular method of grace. Perhaps David remembered the word of the Lord in Deut. xxxii. 39, where Jehovah claims both to kill and to make alive, and he beseeches the Lord to exercise that life-giving power upon his almost expiring servant. Certainly, the man of God had not so many rich promises to rest upon as we have, but even a single word was enough for him, and he right earnestly urges "according to thy word." It is a grand thing to see a believer in the dust and yet pleading the promise, a man at the grave's mouth crying, "quicken me," and hoping that it shall be done.

Note how this first verse of the 4th octonary tallies with the first of the third (17).—"That I may live": . . . "Quicken me." While in a happy state he begs for bountiful dealing, and when in a forlorn condition he prays for quickening. Life is in both cases the object of pursuit: that he may have life, and have it more abundantly.

26. "*I have declared my ways.*" Open confession is good for the soul. Nothing brings more ease and more life to a man than a frank acknowledgment of the evil which has caused the sorrow and the lethargy. Such a declaration proves that the man knows his own condition, and is no longer blinded by pride. Our confessions are not meant to make God know our sins, but to make us know them. "*And thou hearkest me.*" His confession had been accepted; it was not lost labour; God had drawn near to him in it. We ought never to go from a duty till we have been accepted in it. Pardon follows upon penitent confession, and David felt that he had obtained it. It is God's way to forgive our sinful way when we from our hearts confess the wrong.

"*Teach me thy statutes.*" Being truly sorry for his fault, and having obtained full forgiveness, he is anxious to avoid offending again, and hence he begs to be taught obedience. He was not willing to sin through ignorance, he wished to know all the mind of God by being taught it by the best of teachers. He pined after holiness. Justified men always long to be sanctified. When God forgives our sins we are all the more fearful of sinning again. Mercy, which pardons transgression, sets us longing for grace which prevents transgression. We may boldly ask for more when God has given us much; he who has washed out the past stain will not refuse that which will preserve us from present and future defilement. This cry for teaching is frequent in the Psalm; in verse 12 it followed a sight of God, here it follows from a sight of self. Every experience should lead us thus to plead with God.

27. "*Make me to understand the way of thy precepts.*" Give me a deep insight into the practical meaning of thy word; let me get a clear idea of the tone and tenor of thy law. Blind obedience has but small beauty; God would have us follow him with our eyes open. To obey the letter of the word is all that the ignorant can hope for; if we wish to keep God's precepts in their spirit we must come to an understanding of them, and that can be gained nowhere but at the Lord's hands. Our understanding needs enlightenment and direction: he who made our understanding must also

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make us understand. The last sentence was, "teach me thy statutes," and the words, "make me to understand," are an instructive enlargement and exposition of that sentence: we need to be so taught that we understand what we learn. It is to be noted that the Psalmist is not anxious to understand the prophecies, but the precepts, and he is not concerned about the subtleties of the law, but the commonplaces and everyday rules of it, which are described as "the way of thy precepts."

"*So shall I talk of thy wondrous works.*" It is ill talking of what we do not understand. We must be taught of God till we understand, and then we may hope to communicate our knowledge to others with a hope of profiting them. Talk without intelligence is mere talk, and idle talk; but the words of the instructed are as pearls which adorn the ears of them that hear. When our heart has been opened to understand, our lips should be opened to impart knowledge; and we may hope to be taught ourselves when we feel in our hearts a willingness to teach the way of the Lord to those among whom we dwell.

"*Thy wondrous works.*" Remark that the clearest understanding does not cause us to cease from wondering at the ways and works of God. The fact is that the more we know of God's doings the more we admire them, and the more ready we are to speak upon them. Half the wonder in the world is born of ignorance, but holy wonder is the child of understanding. When a man understands the way of the divine precepts he never talks of his own works, and as the tongue must have some theme to speak upon, he begins to extol the works of the all-perfect Lord.

Some in this place read "meditate" or "muse" instead of "talk"; it is singular that the words should be so near of kin, and yet it is right that they should be, for none but foolish people will talk without thinking. If we read the passage in this sense, we take it to mean that in proportion as David understood the word of God he would meditate upon it more and more. It is usually so; the thoughtless care not to know the inner meaning of the Scriptures, while those who know them best are the very men who strive after a greater familiarity with them, and therefore give themselves up to musing upon them.

Observe the third verse of the last eight (19), and see how the sense is akin to this. There he was a stranger in the earth, and here he prays to know his way; there, too, he prayed that the word might not be hid from himself, and here he promises that he will not hide it from others.

28. "*My soul melteth for heaviness.*" He was dissolving away in tears. The solid strength of his constitution was turning to liquid as if molten by the furnace-heat of his afflictions. Heaviness of heart is a killing thing, and when it abounds it threatens to turn life into a long death, in which a man seems to drop away in a perpetual drip of grief. Tears are the distillation of the heart; when a man weeps he wastes away his soul. Some of us know what great heaviness means, for we have been brought under its power again and again, and often have we felt ourselves to be poured out like water, and near to being like water spilt upon the ground, never again to be gathered up. There is one good point in this downcast state, for it is better to be melted with grief than to be hardened by impenitence.

"*Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*" He had found out an ancient promise that the saints shall be strengthened, and here he pleads it. His hope in his state of depression lies not in himself, but in his God; if he may be strengthened from on high he will yet shake off his heaviness and rise to joy again. Observe how he pleads the promise of the word, and asks for nothing more than to be dealt with after the recorded manner of the Lord of mercy. Had not Hannah sung, "He shall give strength unto his King, and exalt the horn of his anointed"? God strengthens us by infusing grace through his word: the word which creates can certainly sustain. Grace can enable us to bear the constant fret of an abiding sorrow, it can

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repair the decay caused by the perpetual tear-drip, and give to the believer the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Let us always resort to prayer in our desponding times, for it is the surest and shortest way out of the depths. In that prayer let us plead nothing but the word of God; for there is no plea like a promise, no argument like a word from our covenant God.

Note how David records his inner soul-life. In verse 20 he says, "My soul breaketh;" in verse 25, "My soul cleaveth to the dust;" and here, "My soul melteth." Further on, in verse 81, he cries, "My soul fainteth;" in 109, "My soul is continually in my hand;" in 167, "My soul hath kept thy testimonies;" and lastly, in 175, "Let my soul live." Some people do not even know that they have a soul, and here is David all soul. What a difference there is between the spiritually living and the spiritually dead.

29. "*Remove from me the way of lying.*" This is the way of sin, error, idolatry, folly, self-righteousness, formalism, hypocrisy. David would not only be kept from that way, but have it kept from him; he cannot endure to have it near him, he would have it swept away from his sight. He desired to be right and upright, true and in the truth; but he feared that a measure of falsehood would cling to him unless the Lord took it away, and therefore he earnestly cried for its removal. False motives may at times sway us, and we may fall into mistaken notions of our own spiritual condition before God, which erroneous conceits may be kept up by a natural prejudice in our own favour, and so we may be confirmed in a delusion, and abide under error unless grace comes to the rescue. No true heart can rest in a false view of itself; it finds no anchorage, but is tossed to and fro till it gets into the truth and the truth into it. The true-born child of heaven sighs out and cries against a lie, desiring to have it taken away as much as a man desires to be set at a distance from a venomous serpent or a raging lion.

"*And grant me thy law graciously.*" He is in a gracious state who looks upon the law itself as a gift of grace. David wishes to have the law opened up to his understanding, engraved upon his heart, and carried out in his life; for this he seeks the Lord, and pleads for it as a gracious grant. No doubt he viewed this as the only mode of deliverance from the power of falsehood: if the law be not in our hearts the lie will enter. David would seem to have remembered those times when, according to the eastern fashion, he had practised deceit for his own preservation, and he saw that he had been weak and erring on that point; therefore he was bowed down in spirit and begged to be quickened and delivered from transgressing in that manner any more. Holy men cannot review their sins without tears, nor weep over them without entreating to be saved from further offending.

There is an evident opposition between falsehood and the gracious power of God's law. The only way to expel the lie is to accept the truth. Grace also has a clear affinity to truth: no sooner do we meet with the sound of the word "graciously" than we hear the footfall of truth: "I have chosen the way of truth." Grace and truth are ever linked together, and a belief of the doctrines of grace is a grand preservative from deadly error.

In the fifth of the preceding octave (21) David cries out against pride, and here against lying—these are much the same thing. Is not pride the greatest of all lies?

30. "*I have chosen the way of truth.*" As he abhorred the way of lying, so he chose the way of truth: a man must choose one or the other, for there cannot be any neutrality in the case. Men do not drop into the right way by chance; they must choose it, and continue to choose it, or they will soon wander from it. Those whom God has chosen in due time choose his way. There is a doctrinal way of truth which we ought to choose, rejecting every dogma of man's devising; there is a ceremonial way of truth which we should follow, detesting all the forms which apostate churches have invented; and then there is a practical way of truth, the way of holiness,

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to which we must adhere whatever may be our temptation to forsake it. Let our election be made, and made irrevocably. Let us answer to all seducers, "I have chosen, and what I have chosen I have chosen." O Lord, by thy grace lead us with a hearty free-will to choose to do thy will; thus shall thine eternal choice of us bring forth the end which it designs.

"*Thy judgments have I laid before me.*" What he had chosen he kept in mind, laying it out before his mind's eye. Men do not become holy by a careless wish: there must be study, consideration, deliberation, and earnest enquiry, or the way of truth will be missed. The commands of God must be set before us as the mark to aim at, the model to work by, the road to walk in. If we put God's judgments into the background we shall soon find ourselves departing from them.

Here again the sixth stanzas of the third and fourth octaves ring out a similar note. "I have kept thy testimonies" (22), and "Thy judgments have I laid before me." This is a happy confession, and there is no wonder that it is repeated.

31. "*I have stuck unto thy testimonies,*"—or I have cleaved, for the word is the same as in verse 25. Though cleaving to the dust of sorrow and of death, yet he kept fast hold of the divine word. This was his comfort, and his faith stuck to it, his love and his obedience held on to it, his heart and his mind abode in meditation upon it. His choice was so heartily and deliberately made that he stuck to it for life, and could not be removed from it by the reproaches of those who despised the way of the Lord. What could he have gained by quitting the sacred testimony? Say rather, what would he not have lost if he had ceased to cleave to the divine word? It is pleasant to look back upon past perseverance and to expect grace to continue equally steadfast in the future. He who has enabled us to stick to him will surely stick to us.

"*O* LORD, *put me not to shame.*" This would happen if God's promises were unfulfilled, and if the heart of God's servant were suffered to fail. This we have no reason to fear, since the Lord is faithful to his word. But it might also happen through the believer's acting in an inconsistent manner, as David had himself once done, when he fell into the way of lying, and pretended to be a madman. If we are not true to our profession we may be left to reap the fruit of our folly, and that will be the bitter thing called "shame." It is evident from this that a believer ought never to be ashamed, but act the part of a grave man who has done nothing to be ashamed of in believing his God, and does not mean to adopt a craven tone in the presence of the Lord's enemies. If we beseech the Lord not to put us to shame, surely we ought not ourselves to be ashamed without cause.

The prayer of this verse is found in the parallel verse of the next section (39): "Turn away my reproach which I fear." It is evidently a petition which was often on the Psalmist's heart. A brave heart is more wounded by shame than by any weapon which a soldier's hand can wield.

32. "*I will run the way of thy commandments.*" With energy, promptitude, and zeal he would perform the will of God, but he needed more life and liberty from the hand of God. "*When thou shalt enlarge my heart.*" Yes, the heart is the master; the feet soon run when the heart is free and energetic. Let the affections be aroused and eagerly set on divine things, and our actions will be full of force, swiftness, and delight. God must work in us first, and then we shall will and do according to his good pleasure. He must change the heart, unite the heart, encourage the heart, strengthen the heart, and enlarge the heart, and then the course of the life will be gracious, sincere, happy, and earnest; so that from our lowest up to our highest state in grace we must attribute all to the free favour of our God. We must run; for grace is not an overwhelming force which compels unwilling minds to move contrary to their will: our running is the spontaneous

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leaping forward of a mind which has been set free by the hand of God, and delights to show its freedom by its bounding speed.

What a change from verse 25 to the present, from cleaving to the dust to running in the way. It is the excellence of holy sorrow that it works in us the quickening for which we seek, and then we show the sincerity of our grief and the reality of our revival by being zealous in the ways of the Lord.

For the third time an octave closes with, "I will." These "I wills" of the Psalms are right worthy of being each one the subject of study and discourse.

Note how the heart has been spoken of up to this point: "whole heart" (2), "uprightness of heart" (7), "hid in mine heart" (11), "enlarge my heart." There are many more allusions further on, and these all go to show what heart-work David's religion was. It is one of the great lacks of our age that heads count for more than hearts, and men are far more ready to learn than to love, though they are by no means eager in either direction.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 25 TO 32.

*The eight verses alphabetically arranged:—*

25. Depressed to the dust is my soul: quicken thou me according to thy word.
26. Declared have I (to thee) my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.
27. Declare thou to me the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.
28. Dropping (*marg.*) is my soul for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.
29. Deceitful ways remove from me; and grant me thy law graciously.
30. Determined have I upon the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me.
31. Deliberately I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame.
32. Day by day I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

—*Theodore Kübler.*

*Verse* 25.—"*My soul cleaveth unto the dust.*" The Hebrew word for "*cleaveth*" signifies "*is joined,*" "*has adhered,*" "*has overtaken,*" "*has taken hold,*" "*has joined itself.*" Our soul is a polypus: as the polypus readily adheres to the rocks, so does the soul cleave to the earth; and hardly can it be torn from the place to which it has once strongly attached itself. Though thy soul be now more perfect, and escaping from the waters of sin has become a bird of heaven, be not careless; earthly things are birdlime and glue; if thou rubbest the wings against these thou wilt be held, and joined to the earth.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse* 25.—"*My soul cleaveth unto the dust,*" etc. The word rendered "*cleaveth*" means to be glued to; to stick fast. It has the sense of adhering firmly to anything, so that it cannot easily be separated from it. The word "*dust*" here may mean either the earth, and earthly things, considered as low, base, unworthy, worldly; or it may mean the grave, as if he were near to that, and in danger of dying. De Wette understands it in the latter sense. Yet the word *cleave* would hardly suggest this idea; and the force of that word would be better represented by the idea that his soul, as it were, *adhered* to the things of earth, that it seemed to be so fastened to them—*so glued* to them that it could not be detached from them; that his affections were low, earthly, grovelling, so as to give him deep distress, and lead him to cry to God for life and strength that he might break away from them.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 25.—"*My soul cleaveth unto the dust,*" &c. The first clause seems intended to suggest two consistent but distinct ideas, that of deep degradation, as in Ps. xliv. 25, and that of death, as in Ps. xxii. 29. The first would be more obvious in itself, and in connection with the parallel referred to; but the other seems to be indicated as the prominent idea by the correlative petition for quickening in the last clause. "*Quicken,*" i.e., save me alive, or restore me to life, the Hebrew word being a causative of the verb *to live.*—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verse* 25.—"*My soul cleaveth to the dust,*" etc. In this verse, David hath a complaint; "*My soul cleaveth to the dust*"; and a prayer; "*Quicken thou me according to thy word.*" The prayer, being well considered, shall teach us the meaning of the complaint; that it was not, as some think, any hard bodily estate which grieved him, but a very sore spiritual oppression (as I may call it), bearing down his soul; that where he should have mounted up toward heaven, he was pressed down to the earth, and was so clogged with earthly cogitations, or affections, or perturbations, that he could not mount up. His particular temptation he expresseth not; for the children of God many times are in that estate that they cannot tell their own griefs; and sometimes so troubled, that it is not expedient, albeit they might, to express them to others.

And hereof we learn, how that which the worldling counts wisdom, to the Christian is folly; what is joy to the one, is grief to the other. The joy of

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a worldling is to cleave unto the earth; when he gripes it surest, he thinks himself happiest, for it is his portion: to take heed to his worldly affairs, and have his mind upon them (in his estimation) is only wisdom. For the serpent's curse is upon him, he creeps on the earth, and licks the dust all the days of his life. This is the miserable condition of the wicked, that even their heavenly soul is become earthly. *Qui secundum corporis appetentiam vivit caro est, etiam anima eorum caro est;* as the Lord spake of those who perished in the Deluge, that they were but flesh, no spirit in them; that is, no spiritual or heavenly motion.

But the Christian, considering that his soul is from above, sets his affection also on those things which are above: he delights to have his conversation in heaven; and it is a grief to him when he finds his motions and affections drawn down and entangled with the earth. His life is to cleave to the Lord; but it is death to him when the neck of his soul is bowed down to the yoke of the world.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 25.—"*My soul cleaveth to the dust.*" "Look up now to the heavens." So once spake the Lord to Abraham his friend, and he speaketh thus to us also. Alas! why must it be so always that, when we come to know ourselves even but a little, we are constantly answering with the mournful sigh, "*My soul cleaveth to the dust*"? Ah! that is indeed the *deepest pain* of a soul which has already tasted that the Lord is merciful, when, although desiring to soar on high, it sadly feels how impossible it is to rise. There is much hidden pain in every heart of man even in the spiritual life; but what can deeper grieve us than the perception that we are chained as with leaden weights to things concerning which we know that they may weary but cannot satisfy us? Nay, we could never have supposed, when we first heard the psalm of the Good Shepherd, that it could issue from a heart that panteth after God so often and so bitterly; we could never have imagined that it could become so cold, so dry, so dark within a heart which at an earlier period had tasted so much of the power of that which is to come. Have we not formerly, with this same psalm, been able to vaunt, "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches"? But afterwards, but now perhaps. . . . Oh sad hours, when the beams of the sun within seem quenched, and nothing but a blood-red disc remains! The fervency of the first love is cooled; earthly cares and sins have, as it were, attached a leaden plummet to the wings of the soul which, God knows, would fain soar upwards. We would render thanks, and scarce can pray; we would pray, and scarce can sigh. Our treasure is in heaven, but our soul cleaves to the earth; at least earth cleaves on all sides so to it, and weighs it down, that the eye merely sees the clouds, the tongue can but breathe forth complaints. Ah, so completely can the earth fetter us, that the heavens appear to be only a problem, and our old man is like the Giant of Mythology, who, cast to the ground in the exhausting combat, receives by contact with his mother earth fresh strength. Oh, were it otherwise! Shall it not at last, at last be altered?

Dost thou really desire it, thou who out of the depths of thy soul so complainest, and canst scarcely find more tears to bewail the sorrow of thy heart? Well is it for thee if the pain thou sufferest teach thee to cry to God: "Quicken thou me, according to thy word." Yea, this is the *best comfort* for him who too well knows what it is to be bowed together with pain; this is the only hope for a heart which almost sinks in still despair. There is an *atmosphere* of life, high above this dust, which streams to us from every side, and penetrates even the darkest dungeon. There is a *spring* of life by which the weary soul may be refreshed; and the entrance to this spring stands open, in spite of all the clouds of dust which obscure this valley of shadows here. There is a *power* of life which can even so completely make an end of our dead state, that we shall walk again before the face of the Lord in the land of the living, and, instead of uttering lamentation, we

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shall bear a song of praise upon our lips. Does not the Prince of life yet live in order also to repeat to us, "Awake and rejoice, thou that dwellest in the dust;" and the Spirit, that bloweth whither he listeth, can, will, shall he not in his own good time, with his living breath, blow from our wings the dust that cleaveth to them? But, indeed, even the gnawing pain of the soul over so much want of spirituality and dulness is ever an encouraging sign that the good work is begun in our hearts: that which is really dead shivers no more at its own cold. "*My soul cleaveth to the dust*," sayest thou, with tears? thus wouldest thou not speak except that already a higher hand between the soul and this dust had cleft a hollow which was unknown to it before. No one has less cause for despair than he who has lost hope in himself, and really learns to seek in God that, which he deeply feels, he least of all can give himself.

Yes, this is the *way* from the deepest pain to procure the best consolation; the humble, earnest, persevering prayer, that he who lives would also give life to our souls, and continue to increase it, till freed from all dryness and deadness of spirit, and unrooted from the earth, we ascend to the eternal mount of light, where at last we behold all earthly clouds beneath us. This the God of life alone can work; but he is willing—nay, we have his own word as pledge, that he promises and bestows on us true life. Only, let us not forget that he who will quicken us "*according*" to his word, also performs this *through* his word. Let us then draw from out the eternally-flowing fountain, and henceforth leave it unconditionally to him, how he will listen to our cry, even though he lead us through dark paths! Even through means of death God can quicken us and keep us alive. . . . Lo, we are here; Lord, do with us as seemeth good to thee! Only, let our souls live, that they may praise thee, here and eternally!—*J. J. Van Oosterzee* (1817—1882), *in* "*The Year of Salvation.*"

*Verse* 25.—"*Cleaveth to the dust.*" Is weighed down by the flesh, which itself is dust.—*James G. Murphy.*

*Verse* 25.—"*The dust*," is the place of the afflicted, the wounded, and the dead. "*Quicken me*," viz., to life, peace, and joy.—*A. R. Fausset.*

*Verse* 25.—"*Quicken thou me*," etc. Seeing he was alive, how prays he that God would quicken him? I answer,—The godly esteem of life, not according to that they have in their body, but in their soul. If the soul lacks the sense of mercy, and a heavenly disposition to spiritual things, they lament over it, as a dead soul: for sure it is, temporal desertions are more heavy to the godly than temporal death. "*According to thy word.*" This is a great faith, that where in respect of his present feeling he found himself dead, yet he hopes for life from God, according to his promise. Such was the faith of Abraham, who under hope, believed above hope. And truly, many times are God's children brought to this estate, that they have nothing to uphold them but the word of God; no sense of mercy, no spiritual disposition; but on the contrary, great darkness, horrible fears and terrors. Only they are sustained by looking to the promise of God, and kept in some hope that he will restore them to life again, because it is his praise to finish the work which he begins.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 25.—"*Quicken thou me.*" This phrase occurs nine times, and only in this psalm. It is of great importance, as it expresses the spiritual change by which a child of dam becomes a child of God. Its source is God; the instrument by which it is effected is the word, verse 50.—*James G. Murphy.*

*Verse* 25.—"*Quicken thou me according to thy word.*" Where there is life there will be the endeavour to rise—the believer will not lie prone in his aspirations after God. From the lowest depths the language of faith is heard ascending to God most high, who performeth all things for the believer. The true child cannot but look towards the loving Father, who is the Almighty, All-sufficient One. Have you not found it so? But will

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you mark the intelligence that shines around the believer's prayer? He prays that the Lord may quicken him *according to his word.* The *word* may be regarded in the light of the standard after which he is to be fashioned; or the Psalmist may have in view the requirements contained in the word regarding the believer's progress; or he may be thinking of the promises found therein in behalf of the poor and needy when they apply. Indeed, all these significations may be wrapt up in the one expression—"*according to thy word*"—the standard of perfection, the requirements of the word, and the promises concerning it. The great exemplar of the believer is Christ,—of old it was the Christ of prophecy. Then the requirements of the Lord's will were scattered through the word. The Psalmist, however, may be dwelling upon the large promises which the Lord hath given towards the perfecting of his people. You see after what the spiritual nature aspires. It is quite enough to the natural man or the formalist that he be as the generally well-behaved and esteemed among professors—the spiritual man aspires beyond—he aspires after being quickened according to God's word. Judge of yourselves.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 25.—"*Quicken thou me according to thy word.*" By thy providence put life into my affairs, by thy grace put life into my affections; cure me of my spiritual deadness, and make me lively in my devotion.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 25.—"*Quicken thou me according to thy word.*" Albeit the Lord suffer his own to lie so long low in their heavy condition of spirit, that they may seem dead; yet by faith in his word he keepeth in them so much life as doth furnish unto them prayer to God for comfort: "*Quicken thou me according to thy word.*"—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 25.—"*Quicken thou me.*" To whom shall the godly fly when life faileth but to that Well-spring of all life? Even as to remove cold the next way is to draw near the fire, so to dispel any death, the next way is to look to him who is our root, by whom we live this natural life. All preservatives and restoratives are nothing, all colleges of physicians are vanity, if compared with him. Other things which have not life, give life as the instruments of him who is life, as fire burneth being the instrument of heat. "When heart and flesh fail, God is the strength of my heart." As a man can let a fire almost go out which had been kindled, and then blow it up, and by application of new fuel make it blaze as much as ever: so can God deal with this flame of life which he hath kindled.—*Paul Bayne.*

*Verse* 25.—"*According to thy word.*" The word removes deadness of conscience and hardness. Is not this word a hammer to soften the heart, and is not this the immortal seed by which we are begotten again? Therefore David, finding his conscience in a dead frame, prayed, "My soul cleaveth to the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word." The *word* is the first thing by which conscience is purified and set right.—*John Sheffield, in* "*A Good Conscience the Strongest Hold,*" 1650.

*Verse* 25.—"*According to thy word.*" What word doth David mean? Either the general promises in the books of Moses or Job; which intimate deliverance to the faithful observers of God's law, or help to the miserable and distressed; or some particular promise given to him by Nathan, or others. Chrysostom saith, "Quicken me according to thy word: but it is not a word of command, but a word of promise." Mark here,—he doth not say *secundum meritum meum*, but, *secundum verbum tuum;* the hope, or that help which we expect from God, is founded upon his word; there is our security, in his promises, not in our deservings: *Promittendo se fecit debitorem, etc.*

When there was so little Scripture written, yet David could find out a word for his support. Alas! in our troubles and afflictions, no promise occurreth to mind. As in outward things, many that have less live better than those that have abundance; so here, now Scripture is so large, we are less diligent, and therefore, though we have so many promises, we are apt

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to faint, we have not a word to bear us up. This word did not help David, till he had lain so long under this heavy condition, that he seemed dead. Many, when they have a promise, think presently to enjoy the comfort of it. No, waiting and striving are first necessary. We never relish the comfort of the promises till the creatures have spent their allowance, and we have been exercised. God will keep his word, and yet we must expect to be tried.

In this his dead condition, faith in God's word kept him alive. When we have least feeling, and there is nothing left us, the word will support us: "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. iv. 19, 20). One way to get comfort is to plead the promise of God in prayer, *Chirographa tua injiciebat tibi Domine*, show him his handwriting; God is tender of his word. These arguings in prayer, are not to work upon God, but ourselves.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verses* 25—32.—One does not wonder at the fluctuations which occur in the feelings and experience of a child of God—at one time high on the mountain, near to God and communing with God, at another in the deep and dark valley. All, more or less, know these changes, and have their sorrowing as well as their rejoicing seasons. When we parted with David last, what was he telling us of his experience? that God's testimonies were *his delight and his counsellors;* but now what a different strain! all joy is darkened, and *his soul cleaveth to the dust.* And there must have been seasons of deep depression and despondency in the heart of David—driven as a fugitive and wanderer from his home, hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, and holding, as he himself says, his life continually in his hands. Yet I think in this portion of the psalm there is evidence of a deeper abasement and sorrow of heart than any mere worldly suffering could produce. He had indeed said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul"; but, even in that moment of weak and murmuring faith, he knew that he was God's anointed one to sit on the throne of Israel. But here there is indication of sin, of grievous sin which had laid his soul low in the dust; and I think the petition in the 29th verse gives us some clue to what that sin had been: "*Remove me from the way of lying.*" Had David—you may well ask in wonder—had David ever lied? had he ever deviated from the strait and honourable path of truth? I am afraid we must own that he had at one time gone so near the confines of a falsehood, that he would be but a poor casuist and a worse moralist who should attempt to defend the Psalmist from the imputation. We cannot read the 27th chapter of the 1st of Samuel without owning into what a sad tissue of equivocation and deceit David was unhappily seduced. Well might his soul cleave to the dust as he reviewed that period of his career; and though grace did for him what it afterwards did for Peter, and he was plucked as a brand out of the burning, yet one can well imagine that, like the Apostle afterwards, when he thought thereon he wept, and that bitterly.—*Barton Bouchier.*

*Verse* 26.—"*I have declared my ways,*" etc. This verse contains a prayer, with a reason after this form:—O Lord, I have oft before declared unto thee the whole state and course of my life, my wanderings, my wants, my doubts, my griefs; I hid nothing from thee, and thou, according to my necessity, didst always hear me: therefore now, Lord, I pray thee to teach me; by thy light illuminate me that I may know thy statutes and receive grace to walk in them. This is a good argument in dealing with the Lord,—I have gotten many mercies and favourable answers from thee; therefore, Lord, I pray thee to give me more; for whom he loves, he loves to the end; and where he begins to show mercy he ceaseth not till he crown his children with mercy. And so gracious is the Lord, that he esteems himself to be honoured as oft

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as we give him the praise that we have found comfort in him, and therefore come to seek more.

Next, it is to be marked how he saith, "*I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me*": these two go well together, Mercy and Truth: truth in the heart of man confessing; mercy in God, hearing and forgiving: happy is the soul wherein these two meet together. Many there are who are destitute of this comfort; they cannot say, God hath heard me, and all because they deal not plainly and truly with the Lord in *declaring their ways* unto him.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 26.—"*I have declared my ways.*" In verse 59 he *thinketh upon his ways*, that is, his inward imperfections and outward aberrations from the strait and straight ways of God; and here he is not ashamed to *declare them*, that is, to acknowledge and confess that all this came upon him because he was forgetful to do God's will. Note the connection between this and the previous verse: My soul clave unto the dust, because I clave not to thee.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 26.—"*I have declared my ways.*" סִפַּרְתִּי, *sipparti*, "I have remembered my ways"; I have searched them out; I have investigated them. And that he had earnestly *prayed* for pardon of what was wrong in them, is evident; for he adds, "*Thou heardest me.*"—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 26.—"*I have declared my ways,*" etc. Him whom thou hast heard in humble confessing of his sins, him thou must teach thy statutes. The saints lay open to God what they find, both good and evil seeking deliverance, supply, strengthening, directing: even as sick patients tell to their doctor both what good and what otherwise they perceive; or as clients lay bare their case to their counsel.

"*Declared.*" As if he had read them out of a book. The saints know their ways. A man that hath light with him seeth the way, and can tell you all about it; another is in darkness and knoweth nothing: the one taketh observation of his course, the other doth not.

"*Thou hast heard me.*" God's goodness is seen in his hearing what we lay open before him. If great ones let a poor man tell his tale at large we count it honourable patience; but it is God's glory to hear our wants, our weakness through sin, the invincibleness of our evils, our utter impotency in ourselves even to seek redress. That mode of procedure would lose the favour of man, but it winneth favour with God. The more humbly we confess all our wants, the more confident we may be that God will hear us. *He teacheth the humble*, for the humble scholar will give to his master the honour of that he learneth.

*I have rehearsed* (*said with myself*) *my ways;* and "thou hast heard my private confession." "*I have declared*" to others what my way is, and "thou hast heard me" so discoursing; wherefore "*teach me,*" seeing I communicate what I receive. It is a plea derived from his carefulness to learn, and from the use he had made of that he had learned. The godly, like candles, light each other.—*Paul Bayne.*

*Verse* 26.—"*I have declared my ways.*" They that would speed with God, should learn this point of Christian ingenuity, unfeignedly to lay open their whole case to him. That is, to declare what they are about, the nature of their affairs, the state of their hearts, what of good or evil they find in themselves, their conflicts, supplies, distresses, hopes; this is declaring our ways—the good and evil we are conscious of. As a sick patient will tell the physician how it is with him, so should we deal with God, if we would find mercy. This declaring his ways may be looked upon, 1. As an act of faith and dependence. 2. As an act of holy friendship. 3. As an act of spiritual contrition, and brokenness of heart: for this declaring must be explained according to what David meant by the expression, "*My ways.*"

First, By his "*ways*" may be meant his businesses or undertakings: I have still made them known to thee, committing them to the direction of

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thy providence; and so it is an act of faith and dependence, consulting with God, and acquainting him with all our desires.

Secondly, By his "*ways*" may be meant, all his straits, sorrows, and dangers; and so this declaration is an act of holy friendship, when a man comes as one friend to another, and acquaints God with his whole state, lays his condition before the Lord, in hope of pity and relief.

Thirdly, By "*ways*" is meant temptations and sins; and so this declaring is an act of spiritual contrition or brokenness of heart. Sins are properly our ways, as Ezek. xviii. 25.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verses* 26, 27, 29, 30.—"*The way of thy precepts.*" "*My ways.*" "*The way of lying.*" "*The way of truth.*" Here should be noticed the two contrasts by which the Prophet teaches what must be shunned both in life and in doctrine, and what embraced. The first respects *the life* of Christians, as the Prophet sets the way of God's commandments over against his own ways, verses 26, 27; and respecting these he confesses that they have pressed him down to the dust and have greatly distressed him; but respecting those he declares that they have again raised him up. He means by his own ways a depraved nature, carnal desire, and the carnal mind which is enmity against God, Rom. viii.; but by the ways of the Lord he denotes the will of God expressed in the Word. Therefore the boastings of the papists of the perfect obedience of the renewed are empty: for David, assured by having been renewed, complains bitterly and with many tears that his soul, under the intolerable weight of sins, had been brought down to the dust of death and almost suffocated; but that God had heard his prayers and brought him back to the way of his commandments. We, here, also, gather that in this life all the saints experience the wrestling and contest of the flesh and the spirit, so that they are continually compelled to mourn that their flesh turns them aside from the way of the Lord into the by-paths of sin: just as Paul cries out, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, etc. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?", Rom. vii. 23, 24.

The second contrast concerneth the *doctrine;* for David opposes the way of lying to the way of truth. We are taught by this contrast that we should eschew false doctrine, and steadfastly adhere to divine truth. To this applies the precept of Paul, Eph. iv. 25. "Wherefore, having put away the lie, speak truth each one with his neighbour." Further, we learn, if we hate our own ways, *i.e.*, confess our sins to the Lord, and, trusting in the Mediator, pray for forgiveness, that God is wont to hear and mercifully to forgive our sins; as it is written, 1 John i. 9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—*Solomon Gesner.*

*Verse* 26.—"*Thou heardest me.*" Past answers to prayer should encourage us to come the more boldly to the throne of grace.—Jacob never forgot the night he spent at Bethel.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 26.—"*Teach me thy statutes.*" The often repetition of this one thing in this psalm argueth, 1. The necessity of this knowledge. 2. The desire he had to obtain it. 3. That such repetitions are not frivolous when they proceed from a sound heart, a zealous affection, and a consideration of the necessity of the thing prayed for. 4. That such as have most light have little in respect of what they should have. 5. As covetous men think they have never gold enough, so Christian men should think they have never knowledge enough.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 26.—"*Teach me.*" We can never do without *teaching*, even in old age. Unless the Spirit of God teaches us we learn in vain.—*Martin Geier.*

*Verses* 26, 27.—Here is David's earnest desire for the continuance of that intimacy that had been between him and his God; not by visions and voices from heaven, but by the Word and Spirit in an ordinary way: "*Teach me thy statutes,*" that is, "*make me to understand the way of thy precepts.*" When



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he knew God had heard his declaration of his ways, he doth not say, Now, Lord, tell me my lot, and let me know what the event will be; but, Now, Lord, tell me my duty, let me know what thou wouldest have me to do as the case stands. Note, Those that in all their ways acknowledge God, may pray in faith that he will direct their steps in the right way. And the surest way of keeping up our communion with God is, by learning his statutes, and walking diligently in the *way of his precepts.—Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 27.—"*Make me to understand.*" Natural blindness is an obstinate disease, and hardly cured: therefore again and again we had need to pray, "Open mine eyes"; "Teach me thy statutes"; "*Make me to understand the way of thy precepts.*" Our ignorance is great even when it is cured in part. The clouds of temptation and carnal affection cause it to return upon us, so that we know not what we know. Therefore he cries, "open my eyes; cause me to understand." Yea, the more we know the more is our ignorance discovered to us: "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy" (Prov. xxx. 2, 3). "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job xlii., 5, 6). Alas, a poor, little, hearsay knowledge availeth not; they abhor themselves when they have more intimate acquaintance. None so confident as a young professor that knoweth a few truths, but in a weak and imperfect manner: the more we know indeed, the more sensible we are of our ignorance, and how liable to this mistake and that, so that we dare not trust ourselves for an hour.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 27.—"*Understand the way . . . so shall I talk.*" We can talk with a better grace of God's "*wondrous works,*" the wonders of providence, and especially the wonders of redeeming love, when we understand *the way* of God's precepts, and walk in that way.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 27.—"*The way of thy precepts.*" He desireth that God would, partly by his Spirit, partly by his ministers, partly by affliction, partly by study and labour, make him to have a right and sound understanding, not only of his *statutes*, but of the *way* of his statutes, that is, after what sort and order he may live and direct his life, according to those things which God hath commanded him in his law. Learn here how hard a thing it is for man, overweening himself in his own wisdom, to know God's will till God *make* him to know.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 27.—"*So shall I talk of thy wondrous works.*" He that is sensible of the wondrous things that are in God's word, will be talking of them. 1. It will be so. 2. It should be so.

1. *It will be so.* When the heart is deeply affected, the tongue cannot hold, but will run out in expressions of it; "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." When cheered and revived in their afflictions saints are transported with the thought of the excellency of God. "Come, and I will tell you what God hath done for my soul" (Ps. lxvi. 15). The woman, when she had found the lost groat, calleth her neighbours to rejoice with her. He that hath but a cold knowledge, will not be so full of good discourse.

2. *It should be so* in a threefold respect: for the honour of God; the edification of others; and for our own profit.

(1). For the honour of God, to whom we are so much indebted, to bring him into request with those about us. Experience deserveth praise; when you have found the Messiah, call another to him: "Andrew calleth Peter, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias: and Philip called Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John i. 41—45).

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(2). For the edification of others: "And thou, being converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32). True grace is communicative as fire, &c.

(3). For our own profit. He that useth his knowledge shall have more. Whereas, on the contrary, full breasts, if not sucked, become dry. In the dividing, the loaves increased. All gifts, but much more spiritual, which are the best, are improved by exercise.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 27.—"*So shall I talk,*" etc. Desire of knowledge should not be for satisfying of curiosity, or for ostentation, or for worldly gain, but to edify ourselves and others in wisdom. . . . . "*Thy wondrous works.*" The works of creation, redemption and providence, either set down in Scripture, or observed in our own experience, transcend our capacity, and cannot but draw admiration from them that see them well.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 27.—"*So shall I talk.*" It is a frequent complaint with Christians, that they are straitened in religious conversation, and often feel unable to speak "to the use of edifying, that they may minister grace to the hearers," Eph. iv. 29. Here, then, is the secret disclosed, by which we shall be kept from the danger of dealing in unfelt truths, for "out of the abundance of the heart our mouths shall speak," Matt. xii. 34. Seek to have the heart searched, cleansed, filled with the graces of the Spirit. Humility, teachableness, simplicity, will bring light unto the understanding, influence the heart, "open the lips," and unite every member that we have in the service and praise of God.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 27.—"*I shall talk of.*" There is a close affinity between all the duties of religion. The same word is rendered *pray*, *meditate*, and *talk of*. We think of God's excellent majesty; we cry to him in humble prayer; we study his word until our souls are filled with gladness and admiration; and then how can we but *talk of his wondrous works?*—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 28.—"*My soul melteth for heaviness.*" In the original the word signifies, "droppeth away." The Septuagint hath it thus: "My soul fell asleep through weariness." Probably by a fault of the transcribers, putting one word for another. My soul droppeth. It may relate (1.) to the plenty of his tears, as the word is used in Scripture: "My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God" (Job xvi. 20), or droppeth to God, the same word; so it notes his deep sorrow and sense of his condition. The like allusion is in Joshua vii. 5; "The heart of the people melted, and became as water." Or (2.) it relates to his languishing under the extremity of his sorrow; as an unctuous thing wasteth by dropping, so was his soul even dropping away. Such a like expression is used in Psalm cvii. 26: "Their soul is melted because of trouble"; and of Jesus Christ, whose strength was exhausted by the greatness of his sorrows, it is said, Psalm xxii. 14, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it melteth in the midst of my bowels." Be the allusion either to the one or to the other; either to the dropping of tears, or to the melting and wasting away of what is fat or unctuous, it notes a vehement sorrow, and brokenness of heart. So much is clear, his soul was even melting away, and unless God did help, he could hold out no longer.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 28.—"*My soul melteth.*" The oldest versions make it mean *to slumber* (LXX. ἐνύσταξεν, Vulg. *dormitavit*), which would make the clause remarkably coincident with Luke xxii. 45.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verse* 28.—"*Heaviness.*" There is nothing may comfort a natural man but David had it; yet cannot all these keep him from that heaviness whereunto, as witnesseth S. Peter, the children of God are subject in this life, through their manifold temptations. The men of the world are so far from this disposition, that if they have health and wealth, they marvel what it is should make a man heavy: they are not acquainted with the exercise of a feeling conscience; they know not the defects of the spiritual life, and are

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not grieved at them: being dead in sin they feel not that they want life; all their care is to eat and drink and make merry. But miserable are they; for in their best estate they are as oxen fed for the slaughter. Woe be to them who laugh now, they shall mourn; but blessed are they who mourn now, for they shall be comforted.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 28.—"*Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*" Strengthen me to do the duties, resist the temptations, and bear up under the burdens of an afflicted state, that the spirit may not fail.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 28.—"*Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*" What is that word which David pleaded? "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," Deut. xxxiii. 25. "Will he plead against me," said Job, "with his great power? No; but he will put strength in me," Job xxiii. 6.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 28.—"*Strengthen thou me.*" Gesenius translates this, "*Keep me alive.*" Thus, קַיְּמֵנִי, in this verse, answers to חַיֵּנִי, in the first verse. This prayer for new strength, or life, is an entreaty that the waste of life through tears might be restored by the life-giving word.—*Frederick G. Marchant.*

*Verse* 29.—It says, "*Remove from me the way,*" and not me from the way; because that way of iniquity is within us, for we are born children of wrath, and the passions innate in us run to the lie, and make the wretched way of crimes in our souls.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse* 29.—"*Remove from me the way of lying.*" Here he acknowledgeth that although he were already exercised in the law of God and in his knowledge, and that although he were a prophet to teach others, nevertheless he was subject to a number of wicked thoughts and imaginations which might always wickedly lead him from the right way, except God had held him with his mighty and strong hand. And this is a point which we ought here rightly to note; for we see how men greatly abuse themselves. When any of us shall have had a good beginning, we straightway think that we are at the highest; we never bethink us to pray any more to God, when once he hath showed us favour enough to serve our turns; but if we have done any small deed, we by-and-by lift up ourselves and wonder at our great virtues, thinking straightway that the Devil can win no more of us. This foolish arrogancy causeth God to let us go astray, so that we fall mightily, yea, that we break both arms and legs, and are in great hazard of breaking our necks. I speak not now of our natural body, but of our soul. Let us look upon David himself; for he it is that hath made proof hereof. It came to pass that he villainously and wickedly erred when he took Bathsheba the wife of his subject, Uriah, to play the whoremonger with her, that he was the cause of so execrable a murder, yea, and that of many; for he did as much as in him lay, to cause the whole army of the Lord and all the people of Israel to be utterly overthrown. See, then, the great negligence and security into which David fell; and see also wherefore he saith, "Alas, my good God, I beseech thee so to guide me, that I may forsake the way of lying."—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 29.—"*Lying.*" A sin that David, through diffidence, fell into frequently. See 1 Sam. xxi. 2, 8, where he roundly telleth three or four lies; and the like he did, 1 Sam. xxvii. 8, 10: this evil he saw by himself, and here prayeth against it.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 29.—"*The way of lying,*" etc. Lying ways are all ways, except the ways of God's commandments: reason, sense, example, custom, event, deceivable lusts, these tell a man he is safe, or that he shall repent of them, and take no hurt in the end, and they promise ease and blessedness, but perform it not. Such as desire to obey God must be kept from evil ways: we are not so sanctified but that temptation will injure our graces. As a fire in kindling, not thoroughly alight, may be quenched by a little water, so may our holiness be damped by temptation. We find within us a

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proneness to false ways, as candles new blown out are soon blown in again. Therefore as burnt children dread the fire, so do we fear the way of lying. God doth not suffer temptations to come into the presence of some; and in others God maketh the heart averse from sin when the temptation is present. We must come out of the ways of sin, ere we can walk in the ways of God. —*Paul Bayne.*

*Verse* 29.—"*The way of lying.*" The whole life of sin is a *lie* from beginning to end. The word "*lying*" occurs *eight* times in this Psalm.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 29.—"*The way of lying.*" By *the way of lying* is to be understood all that is in man's nature, not agreeable to the word, whether it be counsels, or conclusions of the heart, or external actions; and it is called a lying way, because nature promises a good to be gotten by sin which man shall not find in it.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 29.—"*The way of lying.*" The prophet here desireth to be confirmed by God against all corruptions in doctrine, and disorder of conversation, which Satan by his witty and wily instruments doth seek to set abroach in the world. These are called "*the way of lying.*" 1. Because they are invented by Satan, the father of lies. 2. They are countenanced by man's wit, the storehouse of lies. 3. They seem to be that which they are not, which is of the nature of lies. 4. They are contrary to God and his truth, the discoverers of lies.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 29.—"*Grant me thy law graciously.*" He opposes the law of God to the way of lying. First, because it is the only rule of all truth, both in religion and manners: that which is not agreeable to it is but a lie which shall deceive men. Secondly, it destroys and shall at length utterly destroy all contrary errors. As the rod of Aaron devoured the rods of the enchanters: so the word, which is the rod of the mouth of God, shall, in the end, eat up and consume all untruths whatsoever. Thirdly, according to the sentence of this word, so shall it be unto every man; it deceives none. Men shall find by experience it is true: he who walks in a way condemned by the word, shall come to a miserable end. And, on the contrary, it cannot but be well with them who live according to this rule.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 29.—"*Grant me thy law graciously.*" David had ever the book of the law; for every king of Israel was to have it always by him, and the Rabbis say, written with his own hand. But, "*Grant me thy law graciously;*" that is, he desires he might have it not only written by him, but upon him, to have it imprinted upon his heart, that he might have a heart to observe and keep it. That is the blessing he begs for, "*the law*"; and this is begged "*graciously,*" or upon terms of grace, merely according to thine own favour, and good pleasure. Here is,—I. The sin deprecated, "*Remove from me the way of lying.*" II. The good supplicated and asked, "*Grant me thy law graciously.*" In the first clause you have his malady, David had been enticed to a course of lying. In the second we have his remedy, and that is the law of God.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 30.—"*I have chosen the way of truth.*" Here you have the working of a gracious soul. This is more than sitting and hearing the word—having no objection to what you hear. Such hearing is all that can be affirmed of the generality of gospel hearers, except we add, that none are more ready to be caught by false and easy ways of salvation, for they assent to all they hear. The man of God strikes a higher and more spiritual note—he goes into the *choice* of the thing; he chooses the way of truth; and he cannot but choose it; it is the bent of his renewed nature, the effect indeed of all he has been pleading. How act we? The way of truth is all that God has revealed concerning his Son Jesus. The willing heart chooses this way, and all of it; the bitterness of it, the self-denial of it, as well as the comfort of it; a Saviour from sin as well as a Saviour from hell; a Saviour whose

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Spirit can lead from prayerlessness to godliness, from idleness upon the Sabbath-day to a holy keeping of that day, from self-seeking to the seeking of Christ, from slack, inconsistent conduct to a careful observance of all the Lord's will. Where God's people meet, there such will delight to be. O for such to abound among us!—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 30.—"*I have chosen the way of truth.*" Religion is not a matter of chance, but of choice. Have we weighed things in the balance, and, upon mature deliberation, made an election,—"We will have God upon any terms"? Have we sat down and reckoned the cost,—or what religion *must* cost us,—the parting with our lusts; and what it *may* cost us,—the parting with our lives? Have we resolved, through the assistance of grace, to own Christ when the swords and staves are up? and to sail with him, not only in a pleasure-boat, but in a man-of-war? This choosing God speaks him to be ours: hypocrites profess God out of worldly design, not religious choice.—*Thomas Watson, in "The Morning Exercises."*

*Verse* 30.—"*I have chosen the way of truth.*" The choice which David makes here of God's truth proceeds from that choice and election whereby the Lord before all time made choice of David, in Christ, to be one of his elect. For as it is true of love, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us"—we could never have loved him, if first he had not loved us; so it is true of election; if he before time had not chosen us to be his people, we could never in time have chosen him to be our God. And this I mark in them who love the word of God, and delight in it, who can say out of a good heart, that the Lord is their portion and the joy of their soul: this is a sure seal of their election, imprinted by the finger of God in their heart.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 30.—In all our religious exercises, let deliberation precede our resolution, and consideration usher in determination. David did so; and therefore he says here, "*I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.*" Indeed, he cannot but resolve upon, and make choice of, the way of piety, who layeth before him the goodness, the rectitude and pleasantness of the way. When the prodigal considereth with himself how well his father's servants fared, he thinketh of, yea, determineth to go home: "I will arise and go to my father."—*Abraham Wright*, 1661.

*Verse* 30.—"*I have chosen.*" No man ever served the Lord but he first made choice of him to be his Master. Every man when he comes to years of discretion, so as to be master of himself, adviseth with himself what course he shall take, whether he will serve God or the world. Now all the saints of God have made this distinct choice; we will serve the Lord, and no other. Moses when both stood before him, the pleasures of Egypt on the one hand, and God and his people with their afflictions on the other, he chose the latter before the former, Heb. xi. 25. So David saith he did, "*I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me*"; for to choose, is, when a thing lies before a man, and he considers and takes it. So Joshua, "I and my house will serve the Lord."—*John Preston* (1587—1628), *in "The Golden Sceptre held forth to the Humble."* 1638.

*Verse* 30.—"*Truth.*" There are three kinds of truth; truth in heart, truth in word, truth in deed (2 Kings xx. 3; Zech. viii. 16; Heb. x. 22).—*Ayguan. From "The Preacher's Storehouse," by J. E. Vaux.*

*Verse* 30.—"*Thy judgments.*" God's word is called his judgment, because it discerns good from evil; and is not a naked sentence; but, as it points out evil, so it pronounceth plagues against it, which shall be executed according to the sentence thereof.—*William Cowper.*

*Verses* 30, 31.—"*I have chosen*"; "*I have stuck.*" The choosing Christian is likely to be the sticking Christian; when those that are Christians by chance tack about if the wind turn.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 30.—"*Thy judgments have I laid before me.*" The solid consideration that God's word is God's decree or judgment may guard a believer against

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men's terrors and allurements, and fix him in his right choice, as here.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 30.—"*Thy judgments have I laid before me.*" Men that mean to travel the right way will lay before them a map: so David, as his will had resolved upon the ways of truth, so he setteth before his eyes the map of the law, which did manifest this unto him, as the ship-man hath his card with the compass.—*Paul Bayne.*

*Verse* 31.—"*I have stuck unto thy testimonies.*" It is not a little remarkable, that while the Psalmist says (verse 25), "My soul *cleaveth* to the dust," he should say here, "*I have cleaved unto thy testimonies*"; for it is the same original word in both verses. The thing is altogether compatible with the experience of the believer. Within there is the body of indwelling sin, and within there is the undying principle of divine grace. There is the contest between them—"the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal. v. 17), and the believer is constrained to cry out, "O wretched man that I am" (Rom. vii. 24). It is the case; and all believers find it so. While the soul is many times felt cleaving to the dust, the spirit strives to cleave unto God's testimonies. So the believer prays, Cause that I be not put to shame. And keeping close to Christ, brethren, you shall not be put to shame, world without end.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 31.—"*I have stuck unto thy testimonies.*" He adhered to them when momentary interests might have dictated a different line of conduct, when unbelief would have been ready to shrink from the path of duty, when outward appearances were greatly discouraging to fidelity, when all were ready to deride his preposterous determination.—*John Morison.*

*Verse* 31.—"*I have stuck.*" True godliness evermore wears upon her head the garland of perseverance.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 31.—"*Put me not to shame.*" Forasmuch as David, in a good conscience, endeavoured to serve God, he craves that the Lord would not confound him. This is two ways done; either when the Lord forsakes his children, so that in their trouble they feel not his promised comforts, and great confusion of mind and perturbation is upon them; or otherwise when he leaves them as a prey to their enemies, who scorn them for their godly and sincere life, and exult over them in their time of trouble; when they see that all their prayer and other exercises of religion cannot keep them out of their enemies' hands. "He trusted in God: let him deliver him." From this shame and contempt he desires the Lord would keep him, and that he should never be like unto them, who, being disappointed of that wherein they trusted, are ashamed.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 32.—"*I will run in the way of thy commandments when,*" etc. You must remember that the speaker, the Psalmist, is not an unconverted man, but one who had long before been brought under the dominion of religion. He is not, therefore, soliciting the first entrance, but the after and multiplied workings of a principle of grace; and he states his desire in an expression which is singularly descriptive of the outgoing of an influence from the heart over the rest of the man. His wish is that his heart might be enlarged; and this wish amounted to a longing that the whole of himself might act in unison with the heart, so that he might become, as it were, all heart, and thus the heart in the strictest sense be enlarged, through the spreading of itself over body and soul, expanding itself till it embraced all the powers of both. If there be the love of God in the heart, then gradually the heart, possessed and actuated by so noble and stirring a principle, will bring over to a lofty consecration all the energies, whether mental or corporeal, and will be practically the same as though the other departments of man were thus the result turned into heart, and he became, according to the phrase which we are accustomed to employ when describing a character of

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unwonted generosity and warmth, "all heart." So that the desire after an enlarged heart you may fairly consider tantamount to a desire that every faculty might be brought into thorough subjection to God, and that just as God himself is love—love being rather the Divine essence than a Divine attribute, and therefore love mingling itself with all the properties of Godhead, so the man having love in the heart might become all heart, the heart throwing itself into all his capacities, pervading but not obliterating the characteristics of his nature. And exactly in accordance with this view of the enlargement of heart which the Psalmist desired is the practical result which was to follow on its attainment. He was already walking in the way of God's commandments; but what he proposed to himself was the *running* that way: "*I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*" A quickened pace, a more rapid progress, a greater alacrity, a firmer constancy, a more resolute and unflinching obedience, these were the results which the Psalmist looked for from the enlargement of his heart. And truly if all the faculties of mind and body be dedicated to God, with a constant and vigorous step will man press on in the way that leadeth to heaven. So long as the dedication is at best only partial, the world retaining some fraction of its empire, notwithstanding the setting up of the kingdom of God, there can be nothing but a slow and impeded progress, a walking interrupted by repeated haltings, if not backslidings, by much of loitering, if not of actual retreat; but if the man be all heart, then he will be all life, all warmth, all zeal, all energy, and the consequence of this complete surrender to God will be exactly that which is prophetically announced by Isaiah: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."—*Henry Melvill*, 1798—1871.

*Verse* 32.—"*I will run.*" By running is meant cheerful, ready, and zealous observance of God's precepts: it is not go, or walk, but *run*. They that would come to their journey's end, must run in the way of God's commandments. It noteth a speedy or a ready obedience, without delay. We must begin with God betimes. Alas! when we should be at the goal, we have many of us scarce set forth. And it noteth earnestness; when a man's heart is set upon a thing, he thinks he can never do it soon enough. And this is running, when we are vehement and earnest upon the enjoyment of God and Christ in the way of obedience. And it notes again, that the heart freely offereth itself to God.

This running is the fruit of effectual calling. When the Lord speaks of effectual calling, the issue of it is running; when he speaks of the conversion of the Gentiles, "Nations that know not thee shall run unto thee"; and, "Draw me, and we will run after thee." When God draws there is a speedy, earnest motion of the soul.

This running, as it is the fruit of effectual calling, so it is very needful; for cold and faint motions are soon overborne by difficulty and temptation: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. xii. 1). When a man hath a mind to do a thing, though he be hindered and jostled, he takes it patiently, he goes on and cannot stay to debate the business. A slow motion is easily stopped, whereas a swift one bears down that which opposeth it; so is it when men run and are not tired in the service of God. Last of all, the prize calls for running: "So run that ye may obtain" (1 Cor. ix. 24).—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 32.—"*I will run.*" It was not the *walking* "the way of God's commandments," but the *running* "the way of God's commandments," to which David aspired. The text has no connection with the case of one who habitually pursues the opposite path; it has exclusive reference to the pace at which the line of duty is to be traversed. . . . . It may not unnaturally excite surprise, that "the sweet singer of Israel"—he who was

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emphatically declared to be "a man after God's own heart"—should, nevertheless, in the words of the text, seem to imply that *he* was not yet "running the way of God's commandments." But, dear brethren, the greater an individual's comparative holiness, the more intense will be his longing for absolute holiness. To others, David might appear to be speeding marvellously along the path of life; and yet he himself deemed his movements to be far less rapid. His humility was one of the evidences of his holiness.—*Hugh B. Moffat*, 1871.

*Verse* 32.—"*I will run the way.*" His intended course in this way he expresses by running. It is good to be in this way even in the slowest motions; love will creep where it cannot walk. But if thou art so indeed, then thou wilt long for a swifter motion; if thou do but creep, creep on, desire to be enabled to go. If thou goest, but yet haltingly and lamely, yet desire to be strengthened to walk straight; and if thou walkest, let not that satisfy thee, desire to run. So here, David did walk in this way; but he earnestly wishes to mend his pace; he would willingly run, and for that end he desires an enlarged heart.

Some dispute and descant too much whether they go or no, and childishly tell their steps, and would know at every step whether they advance or no, and how much they advance, and thus amuse themselves, and spend the time of doing and going in questioning and doubting. Thus it is with many Christians; but it were a more wise and comfortable way to be endeavouring onwards, and if thou make little progress, at least to be desiring to make more; to be praying and walking, and praying that thou mayest walk faster, and that in the end thou mayest run, not satisfied with anything attained. Yet by that unsatisfiedness we must not be so dejected as to sit down, or to stand still, but rather we must be excited to go on.—*Robert Leighton.*

*Verse* 32.—"*Enlarged my heart,*" or dilated it, namely, with joy. It is obvious to remark the philosophical propriety with which this expression is applied: since the heart is dilated, and the pulse by consequence becomes strong and full, from the exultation of joy as well as of pride. (See Parkhurst on רחב.)—*Richard Mant.*

*Verse* 32.—"*Thou wilt enlarge my heart.*" God would enlarge the very seat of life, and thus give his weak servant more strength; such strength that he need no longer lie prone on the dust struggling to arise; but strength to enable him to run in the way of truth. Thus, he who prays, "*O Lord, put me not to shame,*" finds for himself the truth of an earlier song: "They looked unto him, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed."—*Frederick G. Marchant.*

*Verse* 32.—"*Enlarge my heart.*" It is said of Solomon, that he had "a large heart, (the same word that is used here,) as the sand of the sea shore:" that is a vast, comprehensive spirit, that could fathom much of nature, both its greater and lesser things. Thus, I conceive, the enlargement of the heart compriseth the enlightening of the understanding. There arises a clearer light there to discern spiritual things in a more spiritual manner; to see the vast difference betwixt the vain things the world goes after, and the true solid delight that is in the way of God's commandments; to know the false blush of the pleasures of sin, and what deformity is under that painted mask, and not be allured by it; to have enlarged apprehensions of God, his excellency, and greatness and goodness; how worthy he is to be obeyed and served; this is the great dignity and happiness of the soul; all other pretensions are low and poor in respect of this. Here then is enlargement to see the purity and beauty of his law, how just and reasonable, yea, how pleasant and amiable it is; that his commandments are not grievous, that they are beds of spices; the more we walk in them, still the more of their fragrant smell and sweetness we find.—*Robert Leighton.*

*Verse* 32.—Narrow is the way unto life, but no man can run in it save

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with widened heart.—*Prosper, of Aquitaine*, (403—463), *quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 32.—"*Enlarged.*" Surely a temple for the great God (such as our hearts should be) should be fair and ample. If we would have God dwell in our hearts, and shed abroad his influences, we should make room for God in our souls, by a greater largeness of faith and expectation. The rich man thought of enlarging his barns, when his store was increased upon him (Luke xii.), so should we stretch out the curtains of Christ's tent and habitation, have larger expectations of God, if we would receive more from him. The vessels failed before the oil failed. We are not straitened in God, but in ourselves; by the scantiness of our thoughts, we do not make room for him, nor greaten God: "My soul doth magnify the Lord" (Luke i. 46). Faith doth greaten God. How can we make God greater than he is? As to the declarative being, we can have greater and larger apprehensions of his greatness, goodness, and truth.

1. There needs a large heart, because the command is exceedingly broad: "I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad" (Ps. cxix. 96). A broad law and a narrow heart will never suit: we need love, faith, knowledge, and all to carry us through this work, which is of such a vast extent and latitude.

2. We need enlarged heart, because of the lets and hindrances within ourselves. There is lust drawing off from God to sensual objects: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James i. 14). Therefore there needs something to draw us on, to carry us out with strength and life another way, to urge us in the service of God. Lust sits as a clog upon us, it is a weight of corruption (Heb. xii. 1), retarding us in all our flights and motions, thwarting, opposing, breaking the force of spiritual impulsions, if not hindering them altogether (Gal. v. 17). Well then, lust drawing so strongly one way, God needs to draw us more strongly the other way. When there is a weight to poise us to worldly and sensual objects, we need a strength to carry us on with vigorous and lively motions of soul towards God, an earnest bent upon our souls, which is this enlargement of heart.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 32.—"*My heart.*" The great Physician knows at once where to look for the cause, when he sees anything amiss in the outward life of his people. He well knows that all spiritual disease is heart disease, and it is the heart remedies that he must apply. At one time, our Physician sees symptoms which are violent in their nature; at another, he sees symptoms of languor and debility; but he knows that both come from the heart; and so, it is upon the heart that he operates, when he is about to perform a cure.

The strong action of the heart in all holy things comes from the blessed operation of the Spirit upon it; then only can we "*run*" the way of God's commandments, when he has enlarged our heart.

*Heartiness in action* is the subject to which the reader's attention is here directed, and it is one of considerable importance.

There are many believers, who for want of enlargement of heart are occupying a poor position in the church of God. They are trusting to Jesus for life eternal, and he will doubtless not disappoint them; he will be true to his word, that "he that believeth shall be saved;" but they are still, alas! to a deplorable degree, shut up in self; they have contracted hearts; still do they take narrow views of God's claim, and their own privileges, and the position in which they are set in the world; and however much they might be said to stand, or sit, or walk in the way of God's commandments, they cannot be said to "*run*" in it. Running is a strong and healthy action of the body; it requires energy, it is an exercise that needs a sound heart; none can run in the way of God's commandments, except in strength and vigour imparted by him. The *running* Christians are comparatively

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few; walking and sitting Christians are comparatively common; but the running Christian is so uncommon as often to be thought almost mad.

Let us, for the sake of order, classify our observations on this subject under the following heads:—

I. *What heartiness is.* The heartiness spoken of here under the term, "enlargement of the heart," is cheerfulness in doing God's will—love for that will—a drawing out of the affections towards it—an interest in it; all this it is, and a great deal more, which it is not easy to describe or define.

II. *What heartiness does.* Where there is enlargement of the heart by God, there is an outgoing beyond all the limits which fallen selfishness assigns. The heart contracted at the fall; it shrank when sin entered into it; it became unequal to containing great and generous thoughts; it became a bondaged heart. True! the responsibilities of duty could not be escaped, nor could the directions of conscience; but the affections are voluntary, and the fallen heart drew in its affections from God; it felt that it had the power of withholding them from him and his commandments, and it rejoiced to shew its enmity in withholding its sympathy, where it could not withhold its obedience. . . . .

III. *Whence heartiness comes.* Now, as we have already said, where the heart is operated on by the Spirit, and all its natural evil overruled, it has outgoings which are entirely beyond the limits that fallen selfishness assigns. Love is inwrought with it: the union of sentiment, the identity of interest which love inspires, pervade it, in all belonging to God, for it has received these from God; the heart becomes unbondaged from mere rules, or perhaps to speak more correctly, it rises above them, and it feels—not merely it *knows*, but it *feels*—so much of the beauty of God's commandments, that it delights to "*run*" in them; it loves to be hearty in them; its interests, its affections are in them.—*Philip Bennet Power, in "The 'I Wills' of the Psalms,"* 1862.

*Verse* 32.—Disquiets of heart unfit us for duty, by hindering our activity in the prosecution of duty. The whole heart, soul, and strength should be engaged in all religious services; but these troubles are as clogs and weights to hinder motion. Joy is the dilatation of the soul, and widens it for anything which it undertakes; but grief contracts the heart, and narrows all the faculties. Hence doth David beg an "enlarged heart," as the principle of activity: "*I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart*"; for what else can be expected when the mind is so distracted with fear and sorrow, but that it should be uneven, tottering, weak, and confused? so that if it do set itself to anything, it acts troublesomely, drives on heavily, and doth a very little with a great deal ado; and yet, the unfitness were less, if that little which it can do were well done; but the mind is so interrupted in its endeavours that sometimes in prayer the man begins, and then is presently at a stand, and dares not proceed, his words are swallowed up, 'he is so troubled that he cannot speak' Ps. lxxvii. 4.—*Richard Gilpin*, (1625—1699), *in "Dæmonologia Sacra."*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 33 TO 40.

TEACH me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it *unto* the end.

34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart.

35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; *and* quicken thou me in thy way.

38 Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who *is devoted* to thy fear.

39 Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments *are* good.

40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

A sense of dependence and a consciousness of extreme need pervade this section, which is all made up of prayer and plea. The former eight verses trembled with a sense of sin, quivering with a childlike sense of weakness and folly, which caused the man of God to cry out for the help by which alone his soul could be preserved from falling back into sin.

33. "*Teach me, O* LORD, *the way of thy statutes.*" Child-like, blessed words, from the lips of an old, experienced believer, and he a king, and a man inspired of God. Alas, for those who will never be taught. They dote upon their own wisdom; but their folly is apparent to all who rightly judge. The Psalmist will have the Lord for his teacher; for he feels that his heart will not learn of any less effectual instructor. A sense of great slowness to learn drives us to seek a great teacher. What condescension it is on our great Jehovah's part that he deigns to teach those who seek him. The lesson which is desired is thoroughly practical; the holy man would not only learn the *statutes*, but the *way* of them, the daily use of them, their tenor, spirit, direction, habit, tendency. He would know that path of holiness which is hedged in by divine law, along which the commands of the Lord stand as sign-posts of direction and mile-stones of information, guiding and marking our progress. The very desire to learn this way is in itself an assurance that we shall be taught therein, for he who made us long to learn will be sure to gratify the desire.

"*And I shall keep it unto the end.*" Those who are taught of God never forget their lessons. When divine grace sets a man in the true way he will be true to it. Mere human wit and will have no such enduring influence: there is an end to all perfection of the flesh, but there is no end to heavenly grace except its own end, which is the perfecting of holiness in the fear of the Lord. Perseverance to the end is most certainly to be predicted of those whose beginning is in God, and with God, and by God; but those who commence without the Lord's teaching soon forget what they learn, and start aside from the way upon which they professed to have entered. No one may boast that he will hold on his way in his own strength, for that must depend upon the continual teaching of the Lord: we shall fall like Peter, if we presume on our own firmness as he did. If God keeps us we shall keep his way; and it is a great comfort to know that it is the way with God to keep the feet of his saints. Yet we are to watch as if our

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keeping of the way depended wholly on ourselves; for, according to this verse, our perseverance rests not on any force or compulsion, but on the teaching of the Lord, and assuredly teaching, whoever be the teacher, requires learning on the part of the taught one: no one can teach a man who refuses to learn. Earnestly, then, let us drink in divine instruction, that so we may hold fast our integrity, and to life's latest hour follow on in the path of uprightness! If we receive the living and incorruptible seed of the word of God we must live: apart from this we have no life eternal, but only a name to live.

The "*end*" of which David speaks is the end of life, or the fulness of obedience. He trusted in grace to make him faithful to the utmost, never drawing a line and saying to obedience, "Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further." The end of our keeping the law will come only when we cease to breathe; no good man will think of marking a date and saying, "It is enough, I may now relax my watch, and live after the manner of men." As Christ loves us to the end, so must we serve him to the end. The end of divine teaching is that we may persevere to the end.

The portions of eight show a relationship still. GIMEL begins with prayer for life, that he may keep the word (17); DALETH cries for more life, according to that word (25); and now HE opens with a prayer for teaching, that he may keep the way of God's statutes. If a keen eye is turned upon these verses a closer affinity will be discerned.

34. "*Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law.*" This is the same prayer enlarged, or rather it is a supplement which intensifies it. He not only needs teaching, but the power to learn: he requires not only to understand, but to obtain *an understanding*. How low has sin brought us; for we even lack the faculty to understand spiritual things, and are quite unable to know them till we are endowed with spiritual discernment. Will God in very deed give us understanding? This is a miracle of grace. It will, however, never be wrought upon us till we know our need of it; and we shall not even discover that need till God gives us a measure of understanding to perceive it. We are in a state of complicated ruin, from which nothing but manifold grace can deliver us. Those who feel their folly are by the example of the Psalmist encouraged to pray for understanding: let each man by faith cry, "Give *me* understanding." Others have had it, why may it not come to *me*? It was a gift to them; will not the Lord also freely bestow it upon *me*?

We are not to seek this blessing that we may be famous for wisdom, but that we may be abundant in our love to the law of God. He who has understanding will learn, remember, treasure up, and obey the commandment of the Lord. The gospel gives us grace to keep the law; the free gift leads us to holy service; there is no way of reaching to holiness but by accepting the gift of God. If God gives, we keep; but we never keep the law in order to obtaining grace. The sure result of regeneration, or the bestowal of understanding, is a devout reverence for the law and a resolute keeping of it in the heart. The Spirit of God makes us to know the Lord and to understand somewhat of his love, wisdom, holiness, and majesty; and the result is that we honour the law and yield our hearts to the obedience of the faith.

"*Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.*" The understanding operates upon the affections; it convinces the heart of the beauty of the law, so that the soul loves it with all its powers; and then it reveals the majesty of the lawgiver, and the whole nature bows before his supreme will. An enlightened judgment heals the divisions of the heart, and bends the united affections to a strict and watchful observance of the one rule of life. He alone obeys God who can say, "My Lord, I would serve thee, and do it with all my heart"; and none can truly say this till they have received as a free grant the inward illumination of the Holy Ghost. To observe God's

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law with all our heart at all times is a great grace, and few there be that find it; yet it is to be had if we will consent to be taught of the Lord.

Observe the parallel of verses 2 and 10 where the *whole heart* is spoken of in reference to seeking, and in 58 in pleading for mercy; these are all second verses in their octonaries. The frequent repetition of the phrase shows the importance of undivided love: the heart is never whole or holy till it is whole or united. The heart is never one with God till it is one within itself.

35. "*Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.*" "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Thou hast made me to love the way, now make me to move in it. It is a plain path, which others are treading through thy grace: I see it and admire it; cause me to travel in it. This is the cry of a child that longs to walk, but is too feeble; of a pilgrim who is exhausted, yet pants to be on the march; of a lame man who pines to be able to run. It is a blessed thing to delight in holiness, and surely he who gave us this delight will work in us the yet higher joy of possessing and practising it. Here is our only hope; for we shall not go in the narrow path till we are made to do so by the Maker's own power. O thou who didst once make me, I pray thee make me again: thou hast made me to know; now make me to go. Certainly I shall never be happy till I do, for my sole delight lies in walking according to thy bidding.

The Psalmist does not ask the Lord to do for him what he ought to do for himself: he wishes himself to "go" or tread in the path of the command. He asks not to be carried while he lies passive; but to be made "to go." Grace does not treat us as stocks and stones, to be dragged by horses or engines, but as creatures endowed with life, reason, will, and active powers, who are willing and able to go of themselves if once made to do so. God worketh in us, but it is that we may both will and do according to his good pleasure. The holiness we seek after is not a forced compliance with command, but the indulgence of a whole-hearted passion for goodness, such as shall conform our life to the will of the Lord. Can the reader say, "*therein do I delight*"? Is practical godliness the very jewel of your soul, the coveted prize of your mind? If so, the outward path of life, however rough, will be clean, and lead the soul upward to delight ineffable. He who delights in the law should not doubt but what he will be enabled to run in its ways, for where the heart already finds its joy the feet are sure to follow.

Note that the corresponding verse in the former eight (35) was "Make me to understand," and here we have "Make me to go." Remark the order, first understanding and then going; for a clear understanding is a great assistance towards practical action.

During the last few octaves the fourth has been *the heart* verse: see 20, 28, and now 36. Indeed in all the preceding fourths great heartiness is observable. This also marks the care with which this sacred song was composed.

36. "*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.*" Does not this prayer appear to be superfluous, since it is evident that the Psalmist's heart was set upon obedience? We are sure that there is never a word to spare in Scripture. After asking for active virtue it was meet that the man of God should beg that his heart might be in all that he did. What would his goings be if his heart did not go? It may be that David felt a wandering desire, an inordinate leaning of his soul to worldly gain,—possibly it even intruded into his most devout meditations, and at once he cried out for more grace. The only way to cure a wrong leaning is to have the soul bent in the opposite direction. Holiness of heart is the cure for covetousness. What a blessing it is that we may ask the Lord even for an inclination. Our wills are free, and yet without violating their liberty, grace can incline us in the right

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direction. This can be done by enlightening the understanding as to the excellence of obedience, by strengthening our habits of virtue, by giving us an experience of the sweetness of piety, and by many other ways. If any one duty is irksome to us it behoves us to offer this prayer with special reference thereto: we are to love all the Lord's testimonies, and if we fail in any one point we must pay double attention to it. The leaning of the heart is the way in which the life will lean: hence the force of the petition, "*Incline my heart.*" Happy shall we be when we feel habitually inclined to all that is good. This is not the way in which a carnal heart ever leans; all its inclinations are in opposition to the divine testimonies.

"*And not to covetousness.*" This is the inclination of nature, and grace must put a negative upon it. This vice is as injurious as it is common; it is as mean as it is miserable. It is idolatry, and so it dethrones God; it is selfishness, and so it is cruel to all in its power; it is sordid greed, and so it would sell the Lord himself for pieces of silver. It is a degrading, grovelling, hardening, deadening sin, which withers everything around it that is lovely and Christlike. He who is covetous is of the race of Judas, and will in all probability turn out to be himself a son of perdition. The crime of covetousness is common, but very few will confess it; for when a man heaps up gold in his heart, the dust of it blows into his eyes, and he cannot see his own fault. Our hearts must have some object of desire, and the only way to keep out worldly gain is to put in its place the testimonies of the Lord. If we are inclined or bent one way, we shall be turned *from* the other: the negative virtue is most surely attained by making sure of the positive grace which inevitably produces it.

37. "*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" He had prayed about his heart, and one would have thought that the eyes would so surely have been influenced by the heart that there was no need to make them the objects of a special petition; but our author is resolved to make assurance doubly sure. If the eyes do not see, perhaps the heart may not desire: at any rate, one door of temptation is closed when we do not even look at the painted bauble. Sin first entered man's mind by the eye, and it is still a favourite gate for the incoming of Satan's allurements: hence the need of a double watch upon that portal. The prayer is not so much that the eyes may be shut as "*turned away*"; for we need to have them open, but directed to right objects. Perhaps we are now gazing upon folly, we need to have our eyes turned away; and if we are beholding heavenly things we shall be wise to beg that our eyes may be kept away from vanity. Why should we look on vanity?—it melts away as a vapour. Why not look upon things eternal? Sin is vanity, unjust gain is vanity, self-conceit is vanity, and, indeed, all that is not of God comes under the same head. From all this we must turn away. It is a proof of the sense of weakness felt by the Psalmist and of his entire dependence upon God that he even asks to have his eyes turned for him; he meant not to make himself passive, but he intended to set forth his own utter helplessness apart from the grace of God. For fear he should forget himself and gaze with a lingering longing upon forbidden objects, he entreats the Lord speedily to make him turn away his eyes, hurrying him off from so dangerous a parley with iniquity. If we are kept from looking on vanity we shall be preserved from loving iniquity.

"*And quicken thou me in thy way.*" Give me so much life that dead vanity may have no power over me. Enable me to travel so swiftly in the road to heaven that I may not stop long enough within sight of vanity to be fascinated thereby. The prayer indicates our greatest need,—more life in our obedience. It shows the preserving power of increased life to keep us from the evils which are around us, and it, also, tells us where that increased life must come from, namely, from the Lord alone. Vitality is the cure of vanity. When the heart is full of grace the eyes will be

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cleansed from impurity. On the other hand, if we would be full of life as to the things of God we must keep ourselves apart from sin and folly, or the eyes will soon captivate the mind, and, like Samson, who could slay his thousands, we may ourselves be overcome through the lusts which enter by the eye.

This verse is parallel to verses 21 and 29 in the previous eights: "rebuke," "remove," "turn away"; or "proud," "lying," "vanity."

38. "*Stablish thy word unto thy servant.*" Make me sure of thy sure word: make it sure to me and make me sure of it. If we possess the spirit of service, and yet are troubled with sceptical thoughts we cannot do better than pray to be established in the truth. Times will arise when every doctrine and promise seems to be shaken, and our mind gets no rest: then we must appeal to God for establishment in the faith, for he would have all his servants to be well instructed and confirmed in his word. But we must mind that we are the Lord's servants, for else we shall not long be sound in his truth. Practical holiness is a great help towards doctrinal certainty: if we are God's servants he will confirm his word in our experience. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine"; and so know it as to be fully assured of it. Atheism in the heart is a horrible plague to a God-fearing man, it brings more torment with it than can well be described; and nothing but a visitation of grace can settle the soul after it has been violently assailed thereby. Vanity or falsehood is bad for the eyes, but it is even worse when it defiles the understanding and casts a doubt upon the word of the living God.

"*Who is devoted to thy fear,*" or simply—"*to thy fear.*" That is, make good thy word to godly fear wherever it exists; strengthen the whole body of reverent men. Stablish thy word, not only to me, but to all the godly ones under the sun. Or, again, it may mean—"Stablish thy word to thy fear," namely, that men may be led to fear thee; since a sure faith in the divine promise is the fountain and foundation of godly fear. Men will never worship a God in whom they do not believe. More faith will lead to more godly fear. We cannot look for the fulfilment of promises in our experience unless we live under the influence of the fear of the Lord: establishment in grace is the result of holy watchfulness and prayerful energy. We shall never be rooted and grounded in our belief unless we daily practise what we profess to believe. Full assurance is the reward of obedience. Answers to prayer are given to those whose hearts answer to the Lord's command. If we are devoted to God's fear we shall be delivered from all other fear. He has no fear as to the truth of the word who is filled with fear of the Author of the word. Scepticism is both the parent and the child of impiety; but strong faith both begets piety and is begotten of it. We commend this whole verse to any devout man whose tendency is to scepticism: it will be an admirable prayer for use in seasons of unusually strong misgivings.

39. "*Turn away my reproach which I fear.*" He feared just reproach, trembling lest he should cause the enemy to blaspheme through any glaring inconsistency. We ought to fear this, and watch that we may avoid it. Persecution in the form of calumny may also be prayed against, for it is a sore trial, perhaps the sorest of trials to men of sensitive minds. Many would sooner bear burning at the stake than the trial of cruel mockings. David was quick tempered, and he probably had all the greater dread of slander because it raised his anger, and he could hardly tell what he might not do under great provocation. If God turns away our eyes from falsehood, we may also expect that he will turn away falsehood from injuring our good name. We shall be kept from lies if we keep from lies.

"*For thy judgments are good.*" Therefore he is anxious that none may speak evil of the ways of God through hearing an ill report about himself. We mourn when we are slandered; because the shame is cast rather upon our

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religion than ourselves. If men would be content to attribute evil *to us*, and go no further, we might bear it, for we are evil; but our sorrow is that they cast a slur upon the word and character of God, who is so good, that there is none good in comparison with him. When men rail at God's government of the world it is our duty and privilege to stand up for him, and openly to declare before him, "thy judgments are good"; and we should do the same when they assail the Bible, the gospel, the law, or the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we must take heed that they can bring no truthful accusation against us, or our testimony will be so much wasted breath.

This prayer against reproach is parallel to verse 31, and in general to many other of the seventh verses in the octaves, which usually imply opposition from without and a sacred satisfaction within. Observe the things which are good: "*thy judgments are good;*" "thou art good and doest good" (68); "good for me to have been afflicted" (71); "teach me good judgment" (66).

40. "*Behold, I have longed after thy precepts.*" He can at least claim sincerity. He is deeply bowed down by a sense of his weakness and need of grace; but he does desire to be in all things conformed to the divine will. Where our longings are, there are we in the sight of God. If we have not attained perfection, it is something to have hungered after it. He who has given us to desire, will also grant us to obtain. The precepts are grievous to the ungodly, and therefore when we are so changed as to long for them we have clear evidence of conversion, and we may safely conclude that he who has begun the good work will carry it on. "*Quicken me in thy righteousness.*" Give me more life wherewith to follow thy righteous law; or give me more life because thou hast promised to hear prayer, and it is according to thy righteousness to keep thy word. How often does David plead for quickening! But never once too often. We need quickening every hour of the day, for we are so sadly apt to become slow and languid in the ways of God. It is the Holy Spirit who can pour new life into us; let us not cease crying to him. Let the life we already possess show itself by longing for more.

The last verses of the octaves have generally exhibited an onward look of resolve, hope, and prayer. Here past fruits of grace are made the plea for further blessing. Onward in the heavenly life is the cry of this verse.

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## SPECIAL NOTES ON VERSES 33 TO 40.

Upon this Octonary the Notes furnished by Mr. Marchant, one of the Tutors of the Pastors' College, are so excellent that we give them entire.

SECTION ח, HE.

SUBJECT: THE LAW OF JEHOVAH TO BE SET BEFORE THE EYES, THE MIND, THE FEET, AND THE HEART.

*Key phrase:* הָקֵם לְעַבְדְּךָ אִמְרָתֶךָ. "*Set up before thy servant thy word*" (ver. 38).

*Verse* 33.—THE WORD SET UP BEFORE THE EYES. "*Teach me;*" literally, "*point out,*" "*indicate to me.*" יָרָה, as used here, means "*to send out the hand,*" especially in the sense of pointing out. Hence "to show," "to indicate," "to teach." The Psalmist here prays for direction in its more superficial form. Many paths were before his eyes leading down to death: one path was before him, leading unto life. He here asks to be shown *which* is Jehovah's way. If the Lord will ever show his eyes which way is the right way, then he will keep it unto the end. Here is light wanted for the eyes. As the Indian pursues his trail with unerring eye and unfaltering step, so, watching for every deviation which might take us astray, we should pursue the way which leadeth unto life.

*Verse* 34.—THE WORD SET BEFORE THE MIND. "*Give me understanding.*" The word used here refers to mental comprehension, as distinguished from the mere direction, or pointing out, asked for in the previous verse. Here the prayer is, "*Make me to discern,*" "*Cause me to perceive,*" *i.e.*, with the understanding. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing, by the word of God." The outer senses must first see the way, then the mind must understand it, then, with faith and love, the heart should follow it. Thus, too, the Psalmist, if God will cause him to understand the law, will keep it with all his heart. Still, the heart is prone to lean to things earthly and sinful, and divine help has presently to be invoked for that also.

*Verse* 35.—THE WORD SET BEFORE THE FEET. The word הַדְרִיכֵנִי is from דָּרַךְ "*to tread with the feet,*" "*to trample.*" Hence, "*Make me to go,*" alludes here to the very act of walking in the divine way, in distinction from mere perception of the way with the eyes and with the understanding. It is in this matter of practical walking that the actual difficulties of the way seem to come more forcibly into sight; hence we no longer have דֶּרֶךְ used (as in verse 33) which may mean a broad open way, but נָתִיב, which (says Gesenius) "never denotes a public and royal road, such as was raised up and formed by art, but always a footpath." So the younger Buxtorf renders the word by *Semita.* When the feet really come to tread it, the way of truth is ever found to be "the narrow way."

*Verse* 36.—THE WORD SET BEFORE THE HEART. "*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.*" It is nothing for the eyes to see, for the mind to understand, nor even for the feet to be made to go in the way of truth, if the heart be not inclined thereunto also. It is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness. To be without love is, according to 1 Cor. xiii., to be without everything.

Thus the sense of these four methodical petitions in this section is as follows: Make me to see, make me to understand, make me to go in, and make me to love to go in, the beaten and narrow path of thy testimonies. So far as I gather, Luther gives almost the exact sense of the foregoing exposition; for he translates the opening words of verses 33, 34, 35, and 36 by terms signifying respectively, "Point out to me," "Explain to me," "Lead me," and "Incline (bend, slope) my heart," etc.

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*Verse* 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes,*" etc. Literally, "*Make mine eyes to pass from seeing vanity;*" as though he would pray, Whatever is of vanity, make me to pass without seeing it. The sentiment is strikingly like that in our Lord's prayer: "Lead us not into temptation." Having prayed for what he wanted to see, the Psalmist here prays for the hiding of what he would not see.

*Verse* 38.—"*Stablish thy word unto thy servant.*" In view of the exposition of the previous verses of the section this would be more correctly rendered, "*Hold up thy word before thy servant;*" *i.e.*, hold it up to my eyes, to my mind, to my steps, and to my heart. Make all that is vain to pass, so that I see it not; but let thy word be so set up before my whole being that I shall always see it, and thus, by it, see my way to thee.

*Verse* 39.—"*Turn away my reproach which I fear.*" "Cause to pass my reproach which *I feared.*" This also, like the vanity spoken of in verse 37, the Psalmist prays that he may not see. He would have the gaze of his whole manhood bent only on the word. The reproach which he feared is that to which he had already referred in verses 21, 22, and perhaps again in verse 31. The proud had erred from the commandments, and had inherited rebuke; it was the reproach and shame which were theirs that the Psalmist would have to be turned aside, so that they should not be seen. "*For thy judgments are good.*" This is given as a reason why the reproach should be thus turned aside. The proud had thought lightly and contemptuously on the divine judgments, hence their reproach; the Psalmist held those judgments to be good, and thus hoped that he might not see reproach.

*Verse* 40.—"*Behold, I have longed after,*" etc. This is given as an intenser form of the statement which he had just made, that he esteemed the judgments to be good. They were so good that he longed after them. Not only so, but he desired to long after them even more. Thus he prays for even more life and vigour in pursuing the path which they pointed out—"*Quicken me in thy righteousness.*" He who really longs after divine truth, mourns that he does not long more. When the heart has no love, the mind has no light, and can only judge the precepts erroneously. "The pure in heart" see better with the mind than can the impure. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Love so enlarges discernment that he who really loves often finds that his judgment of the blessedness of truth has outstripped even his longing for it. Hence it is the quick who cry, "*Quicken me*"; it is those who have living desires who pray for yet more life in the way of righteousness.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 33 TO 40.

*Verses* 33—40.—In this Octonarius, now and again, the same prayer is repeated, of which several times mention has before been made. For he prays that he may be divinely taught, governed, strengthened, and defended against the calumnies, reproaches, and threatenings of his enemies. And the prayer is full of the most ardent longings, which is manifest from the same resolve being so frequently repeated. For the more he knows the ignorance, obscurity, doubts, and the imbecility of the human mind, and sees how men are impelled by a slight momentum, so that they fall away from the truth and embrace errors repugnant to the divine word, or fall into great sins, the more ardently and strongly does he ask in prayer that he may be divinely taught, governed, and strengthened, lest he should cast away acknowledged truth, or plunge himself into wickedness. And by his example he teaches that we, also, against blindness born with us, and the imbecility of our flesh, and also against the snares and madnesses of devils should fortify ourselves with those weapons; namely, with the right study and knowledge of the divine Word, and with constant prayer. For if so great a man, who had made such pre-eminent attainments, prayed for this, how much more ought they to do so, who are but novices and ignorant beginners. This is the sum of this Octonarius.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

*Verses* 33—40.—In this part, nine times does the Psalmist send up his petition to his God, and six of these he accompanies with a reason for being heard. . . . These petitions are the utterances of a renewed heart; the man of God could not but give utterance to them—such was the new refining process that had taken place upon him. . . . . The outline runs thus:—Petitions are offered for Instruction (33) and Understanding (34), and likewise for Spiritual Ability (35) and Inclination (36). These are followed by petitions for Exemption from the Spirit of Vanity (37), and for Divine Quickening (37). The Lord is besought to make good his Word of Promise to his servant (38), and to deliver him from Feared Reproach. Last of all, the man of God places his prayer for quickening upon the ground of the Divine Righteousness (40). May the Divine Spirit teach us to compare ourselves with what we find here, as we would see the salvation of our God!—*John Stephen.*

*Verses* 33—40.—I observe that in this one octonary which is not to be found in any of the rest, namely, that in every several verse there is a several prayer. In the first whereof he prayeth to be taught, and then promiseth to take in that which God shall teach him. He had before resolved to run in this way; but he felt forthwith his own natural aberrations, and therefore he cometh to this guide to be taught.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 33.—"*Teach me, O* LORD, *the way of thy statutes,*" etc. Instruction from above is necessary for the children of God, while they continue in this world. The more we know, the more we shall desire to know; we shall beg a daily supply of grace, as well as of bread; and a taste of "the cluster of Eshcol" will make us long after the vintage of Canaan (Numb. xiii. 23). Religion is the art of holy living, and then only known when it is practised; as he is not a master of music who can read the notes which compose it, but he who has learnt to take a lesson readily from the book, and play it on his instrument; after which the pleasure it affords will be sufficient motive for continuing so to do.—*George Horne.*

*Verse* 33.—"*Teach me, O* LORD, *the way of thy statutes,*" etc. In the sincerity of your hearts go to God for his teaching. God is pleased with the request. "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing" (1 Kings iii. 9, 10). Oh, beg it of God, for these three reasons—1. The way of God's statutes is worthy to be found by all. 2. It

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is hard to be found and kept by any. 3. It is so dangerous to miss it, that this should quicken us to be earnest with God.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 33.—"*Teach me, O* LORD," etc. "He who is his own pupil," remarks S. Bernard, "has a fool for his master." A soldier who enters on a march does not settle for himself the order of his going, nor begin the journey at his own will, nor yet choose pleasant short-cuts, lest he should fall out of rank, away from the standards, but gets the route from his general, and keeps to it; advances in a prescribed order, walks armed, and goes straight on to the end of his march, to find there the supplies provided by the commissariat. If he goes by any other road, he gets no rations, and finds no quarters ready, because the general's orders are that all things of this kind shall be prepared for those who follow him, and turn not aside to the right hand or the left. And thus he who follows his general does not break down, and that for good reasons; for the general consults not for his own convenience, but for the capability of his whole army. And this, too, is Christ's order of march, as he leads his great host out of the spiritual Egypt to the eternal Land of Paradise.—*Ambrose, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 33.—"*Teach me, O* LORD, *the way*," etc. It should never be forgotten, as this fifth section teaches us, that there is a way marked out by God's own appointment for all his people to walk in, and in which to persevere. Others lay down a path each for himself, and keeping to it think they are safe. David did not trust to anything of this kind; he was only desirous of being found in the way of God's ordinance, and to be so taught of God as to keep it to the end; or as the original reads, keep it the end, the end of his profession, the salvation of his soul.—*W. Wilson.*

*Verse* 33.—"*Teach me, O* LORD, *the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it*," etc. If thou continue a teacher of me, saith David, I shall continue a servant to thee. Perseverance cannot be unless continual light and grace be furnished to us from the Lord. As the tree which hath not sap at the root may flourish for a while, but cannot continue; so a man, whose heart is not watered with the dew of God's grace continually, may for a time make a fair show of godliness, but in the end he will fall away. We bear not the root, but the root bears us: let us tremble and fear. If we abide not in our Lord, we become withered branches, good for nothing but the fire. Let us alway pray that he would ever abide with us, to inform us by his light, and lead us by his power, in that way which may bring us to himself.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 33.—"*Statutes*," from a word signifying to *mark, trace out, describe* and *ordain;* because they *mark out* our way, *describe* the line of conduct we are to pursue, and *order* or *ordain* what we are to observe.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 33.—God's "*statutes*" declare his authority and power of giving us laws.—*Matthew Pool,* 1624—1679.

*Verse* 33.—"*Unto the end*," or, *by way of return*, or *reward*, or *gratitude* to thee; God's mercy in *teaching* being in all reason to be *rewarded* or answered by our *observing* and taking exact care of what he teaches. Or else by analogy with Psalm xix. 11, where the *keeping* his *commandments* brings *great reward* with it: it may here be rendered עֵקֶב (understanding the preposition לְ) *for the reward*, meaning the present joy of it, verse 32, not excluding the future crown.—*H. Hammond.*

*Verse* 33.—"*Unto the end.*" *Quite through;* the Hebrew is, *to the heel.* The force of the words seems to be, "Quite through, from head to foot."—*Zachary Mudge,* 1744.

*Verses* 33, 34.—"*Unto the end.*" He will be no *temporizer;* he will keep it "*to the end.*" He will be no *hypocrite;* he will keep it "*with his whole heart.*"—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 34.—"*Give me understanding.*" The Psalmist goes to the root of

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the matter; he is taught to do so by the Spirit of all teaching. He would not merely be taught, as a master would teach, but he would have his mind remoulded and informed as only the Creator could do. The words imply as much. "*Give me understanding*"—make me to understand. Not merely did he want to know a thing—the general nature of it; but he wished to understand the beginning, the outgoing and the end of it. He wanted to attain the power of distinction between right and wrong—spiritual discernment that so he might discern the right, and, at the same time, all that was contrary to it; he wanted understanding, that so he might know, and discern, and prize the truth, the true way of God, carefully avoiding all that would be aside from it.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 34.—"*Give me understanding.*" This is that which we are indebted to Christ for; for "the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding" (1 John v. 20).—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 34.—"*Understanding.*" The understanding is the pilot and guide of the whole man; that faculty which sits at the stern of the soul: but as the most expert guide may mistake in the dark, so may the understanding, when it wants the light of knowledge. "Without knowledge the mind cannot be good" (Prov. xix. 2); nor the life good; nor the external condition safe (Eph. iv. 18). "My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge" (Hosea iv. 6).

It is ordinary in Scripture to set profaneness, and all kinds of miscarriages, upon the score of ignorance. Diseases in the body have many times their rise from distempers in the *head;* and exorbitances in practice, from errors in the judgment. And, indeed, in every sin, there is something both of ignorance and error at the bottom: for did sinners truly know what they do in sinning, we might say of every sin what the Apostle speaks concerning that great sin, "Had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 8). Did they truly know that every sin is a provoking the Lord to jealousy, a proclaiming war against heaven, a crucifying the Lord Jesus afresh, a treasuring up wrath afresh unto themselves against the day of wrath; and that if ever they be pardoned, it must be at no lower a rate than the price of his blood—*it were scarce possible* but sin, instead of alluring, should affright, and instead of tempting, scare.—*From the "Recommendatory Epistle prefixed to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms."*

*Verse* 34.—"*My whole heart.*" The whole man is God's by every kind of right and title; and therefore, when he requireth the whole heart, he doth but require that which is his own. God gave us the whole by creation, preserveth the whole, redeemeth the whole, and promiseth to glorify the whole. If we had been mangled in creation we would have been troubled; if born without hands or feet. If God should turn us off to ourselves to keep that part to ourselves which we reserved from him, or if he should make such a division at death, take a part to heaven, or if Christ had bought part: "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. vi. 20). If you have had any good work upon you, God sanctified the whole in a gospel-sense, that is every part: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. v. 23). Not only conscience, but will and affections, appetite and body. And you have given all to him for his use: "I am my beloved's"! not a part, but the whole. He could not endure Ananias that kept back part of the price; all is his due. When the world, pleasure, ambition, pride, desire of riches, unchaste love, desire a part in us, we may remember we have no affections to dispose of without God's leave. It is all his, and it is sacrilege to rob or detain any part from God. Shall I alienate that which is God's to satisfy the world, the flesh, and the Devil?—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verses* 34, 35.—"*Give me understanding.*" "*Make me to go.*" The under-

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standing which he seeks leads to going, and is sought to that end. God's teaching begets obedience; he showeth us the path of life, and he maketh us to go in it. It is such instruction as giveth strength, that exciteth the sluggish will, and breaketh the force of corrupt inclinations; it removeth the darkness which corruption and sin have brought upon the mind, and maketh us pliable and ready to obey; yea, it giveth not only the will, but the deed; in short, it engageth us in a watchful, careful, uniform, and constant obedience.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 35.—"*Make me to go in the path of thy commandments.*" David, in the former verses, had begged for light, now for strength to walk according to this light. We need not only light to know our way, but a heart to walk in it. Direction is necessary because of the blindness of our minds; and the effectual impulsions of grace are necessary because of the weakness of our hearts. It will not answer our duty to have a naked notion of truths, unless we embrace and pursue them. So, accordingly, we need a double assistance from God; the mind must be enlightened, the will moved and inclined. The work of a Christian lies not in depth of speculation, but in the height of practice. The excellency of Divine grace consisteth in this,—That God doth first teach what is to be done, and then make us to do what is taught: "*Make me to go in the path of thy commandments.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 35.—"*The path of thy commandments.*" They are termed "*the paths,*" because paths are narrow, short, straight, clean passages for people on foot only, and not for horses and carriages; and such is the way of the Lord, as compared with that of the flesh and of the world, all the ways of which are broad, filthy, and crooked, trodden by the brute beasts, the type of carnal, animal man. He assigns a reason for being heard when he says, "*For this same I have desired*"; because, through God's grace, I have chosen this path, and desired to walk in it, and it is only meet that he who gives the will should give the grace to accomplish, as St. Paul says, "Who worketh in you both to will and to do."—*Robert Bellarmine.*

*Verse* 35.—"*The path*" is "*the path of thy commandments.*" Not any new way, but the old and pathed way wherein all the servants of God have walked before him, and for which the Grecians (as Euthymius noteth) called it τριβον, *quasi viam tritam.* But howsoever this way be pathed, by the walking and treading of many in it, yet he acknowledgeth it is but one, yea, and a narrow and difficult path to keep, and therefore seeks he to be guided into it.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 35.—"*The path.*" It is a "*path,*" not a public road; a path where no *beast* goes, and *men* seldom.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verses* 35, 37.—"*The path.*" "*Thy way.*" The Hindus call *panth* or *way* the line of doctrine of any sect followed, in order to attain to *mukti*, or deliverance from sin. *Way* signifies the chief means to an end, and is applied to the Scriptures, Ps. cxix. 27, to God's counsels, to God's works. This spiritual way is—(1) *easy* to find, Isai. xxxv. 8; (2) *clean*, no mud of sin; (3) never out of *repair.* Christ the same now as 6,000 years ago; (4) no *lion* or wild beasts on; (5) *costly*, the blood of Christ made it; (6) not *lonely*, many believers on it, Heb. xii. 1; (7) no *toll*, all may come; (8) *wide.* The way to the cities of refuge was forty-eight feet wide. The map of the Bible shows this path; (9) the *end* pleasant—Heaven.—*J. Long, in "Eastern Proverbs and Maxims illustrating old Truths,"* 1881.

*Verses* 35, 36.—"*Therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.*" A child of God hath not the bent of his heart so perfectly fixed towards God but it is ever and anon returning to its old bent and bias again. The best may find that they cannot keep their affections as loose from the world when they have houses, and lands, and all things at their will, as they could when they are kept low and bare. The best may find that their love to heavenly things is on the wane as worldly things are on the increase.

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It is reported of Pius Quintus that he should say of himself that, when he first entered into orders, he had some hopes of his salvation; when he came to be a cardinal, he doubted of it; but since he came to be pope, he did even almost despair. Many may find a very great change in themselves, much decay of zeal for God's glory, and love to and relish of God's word, and mindfulness of heavenly things, as it fares better with them in the world. Now it is good to observe this before the mischief increaseth. Look, as jealousy and caution are necessary to prevent the entrance and beginning of this mischief, so observation is necessary to prevent the increase of it. When the world doth get too deep an interest in our hearts, when it begins to insinuate and entice us from God, and weaken our delight in the ways of God and zeal for his glory, then we need often to tell you how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 36.—"*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*" We must be convinced that covetousness, I mean that our covetousness, is a vice; for it holds something of a virtue, of frugality, which is not to waste that which one hath: and this makes us entertain thoughts that it is no vice; and we often say that it is good to be a little worldly; a little covetousness we like well; which shows that we do not indeed and in heart, hold it to be a sin. For if sin be naught, a little of sin cannot be good. As good say, a little poison were good, so it be not too much. And so we find, that men will rate at their children for spending, and are ready to turn them out of doors, if they be given unto waste; but if they be near and pinching then we like that too much; and I scarce know a man who doth use to call upon his children that they spare not, save not. I know youth is rather addicted the other way, and is more subject to waste and consume, by reason that the natural heat is quick and active in them; and therefore indeed there is more fear and danger that they prove prodigal and turn wasters, and therefore the more may be said and done that way to youth. But the thing I press is, that in case we see our children in their youth to begin to be covetous and worldly, we call them good husbands, and are but too glad to see it so, and are too much pleased with them for it. Little do they think that worldliness is a most guiltful sin in respect of God, and most hurtful in respect of men. Hark what the word of God saith of it, Ephesians v. 5: *It is idolatry*, and idolatry is the first sin of the first table. *It is the root of all evils*, 1 Tim. vi. 10. There is no evil but a worldly man will do it to save his purse. Thus David: "*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness*": he saith not, this or that testimony, but (as including all the laws of God) he saith "*testimonies*"; to show us that covetousness draws us away, not from some only, but from all God's commandments. So St. Paul: where covetousness is, there are "many lusts," 1 Tim. vi. 9, and "many sorrows," 1 Tim. vi. 10. "It drowns men in perdition and destruction," 1 Tim. vi. 9. And the Greek word signifies such a drowning as is almost past all hope and recovery. It is the bane of all society: men cry out of it, because they would have none covetous, none rich but themselves. A hater he is of mankind; he hates all poor, because they would beg something of him; and all rich, because they have riches which he would have. A covetous man would have all that all have. Thus speaks a noble father.* Such believe not the word, they trust neither God nor man. For he that trusts not God, cannot trust man. It robs God of that confidence we should have in him, and dependence we owe unto him; it turns a man from all the commandments. Hence the prophet David prays God to turn his heart to his commandments, "*and not to covetousness.*" For not only we *ought* not, but as the phrase is, "we *cannot* serve God and mammon," Luke xvi. 13.—*Richard Capel, in "Tentations: their Nature, Danger, Cure."* 1655.

* Chrysostom.

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*Verse* 36.—"*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*" Without a restraining hand the heart is prone to turn aside into the bye-ways of petty love of pelf. The remedy must be from above. Heavenly aid is therefore sought.—*Henry Law.*

*Verse* 36.—"*Incline my heart.*" Were we naturally and spontaneously inclined to the righteousness of the law, there would be no occasion for the petition of the Psalmist, "*Incline my heart.*" It remains, therefore, that our hearts are full of sinful thoughts, and wholly rebellious until God by his grace change them.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 36.—"*Incline my heart.*" In the former verses David had asked understanding and direction to know the Lord's will; now he asketh an inclination of heart to do the Lord's will. The understanding needs not only to be enlightened, but the will to be moved and changed. Man's heart is of its own accord averse from God and holiness, even then when the wit is most refined, and the understanding is stocked and stored with high notions about it: therefore David doth not only say, "Give me understanding," but, "*Incline my heart.*" We can be worldly of ourselves, but we cannot be holy and heavenly of ourselves; that must be asked of him who is the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. They that plead for the power of nature, shut out the use of prayer. But Austin hath said well, *Natura vera confessione non falsa defensione opus habet:* we need rather to confess our weakness, than defend our strength. Thus doth David, and so will every broken-hearted Christian that hath had an experience of the inclinations of his own soul, he will come to God, and say, "*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 36.—"*Incline.*" Then shall I not decline.—*James G. Murphy.*

*Verse* 36.—"*Unto thy testimonies.*" The contrast is most striking. There are the *divine testimonies* on the one hand, and there is "*covetousness*" on the other. God stands on one side, the world on the other. The renewed man chooses between the two; he does not require long to think, and God is his choice.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 36.—"*Not to covetousness.*" He prays in particular that his heart may be diverted from covetousness, which is not only an evil, but as saith the Apostle, "the root of all evil." David here opposes it as an adversary to all the righteousness of God's testimonies: it inverts the order of nature, and makes the heavenly soul earthly. It is a handmaid of all sins; for there is no sin which a covetous man will not serve for his gain. We should beware of all sins, but specially of mother-sins.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 36.—"*Covetousness,*" or rather, "gain unjustly acquired." . . . . The Hebrew word בצע can only mean *plunder, rapine, unjust gain.*—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

*Verse* 36.—"*Covetousness.*" S. Bonaventura, on our psalm, says *Covetousness* must be hated, shunned, put away: must be hated, because it attacks the life of nature: must be shunned, because it hinders the life of grace: must be put away, because it obstructs the life of glory. Clemens Alexandrinus says that covetousness is the citadel of the vices, and Ambrose says that it is the loss of the soul.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse* 36.—"*Covetousness.*" I would observe to the reader, and desire him duly and seriously to consider, that although this commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," is placed the last in number, yet it is too often the first that is broken, man's covetous heart leading the van in transgression.—*William Crouch, in "The Enormous Sin of Covetousness detected,"* 1708.

*Verse* 36.—"*Covetousness*" is an immoderate desire of riches, in which these vices concur. *First*, An excessive love of riches, and the fixing of our hearts upon them. *Secondly*, A resolution to become rich, either by lawful or unlawful means, 1 Tim. vi. 9. *Thirdly*, Too much haste in gathering riches, joined with impatience of any delay, Prov. xxviii. 20, 22, and xx. 21.

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*Fourthly*, An insatiable appetite, which can never be satisfied; but when they have too much, they still desire more, and have never enough, Eccles. iv. 8. Like the horseleech, Prov. xxx. 15; the dropsy, and hell itself, Prov. xxvii. 20. *Fifthly*, Miser-like tenacity, whereby they refuse to communicate their goods, either for the use of others, or themselves. *Sixthly*, Cruelty. Prov. i. 18, 19, exercised both in their unmercifulness and oppression of the poor. Covetousness is a most heinous vice; for it is idolatry, and the root of all evil, Col. iii. 5; 1 Tim. vi. 10; a pernicious thorn, that stifles all grace and choketh the seed of the word, Matt. xiii. 22, and pierceth men through with many sorrows, 1 Tim. vi. 10, and drowneth them in destruction and perdition.—*James Usher*, 1580—1655.

*Verse* 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes*," etc. Having prayed for his heart, he now prayeth for his eyes also. *Omnia à Deo petit, docens, illum omnia efficere.* By the eyes oftentimes, as by windows, death enters into the heart; therefore to keep the heart in a good estate three things are requisite, First, a careful study of the senses, specially of the eyes; for it is a righteous working of the Lord, *ut qui exteriori oculo negligenter utitur, interiori non injustè cæcetur;* that he who negligently useth the external eye of his body, should be punished with blindness in the internal eye of his mind. And for this cause Nazianzen, deploring the calamities of his soul, wished that a door might be set before his eyes and ears, to close them when they opened to anything that is not good; *malis autem sua sponte uturumque cladaretur.* The second thing is, a subduing of the body by discipline. And the third is, continuance in prayer.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" Notice this, that he does not say, I will turn away mine eyes; but, "*Turn away mine eyes.*" This shows that it is not possible for us sufficiently to keep our eyes by our own caution and diligence; but there must be divine keeping. For, first, wheresoever in this world you turn yourself provocations to evil are met with. Secondly, with the unwary, and with far different persons, the eyes, the servants of a corrupt heart, wander after the things which are vanities. Thirdly, before you are aware, the evil contracted through the eyes creeps in to the inmost recesses of the heart, and casts in the seeds of perdition. This the Psalmist himself had experienced, not without the greatest trouble both of heart and condition.—*Wolfgang Musculus*, 1497—1563.

*Verse* 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" It may seem a strange prayer of David, to say, "*Turn away mine eyes from seeing vanity;*" as though God meddled with our looking; or that we had not power in ourselves to cast our eyes upon what objects we list. But is it not, that what we delight in, we delight to look upon? and what we love, we love to be seeing? and so to pray to God, that our eyes may not see vanity; is as much as to pray for grace, that we be not in love with vanity. For, indeed, vanity hath of itself so graceful an aspect, that it is not for a natural man to leave looking upon it; unless the fairer aspect of God's grace draw our eyes from vanity, to look upon itself; which will always naturally be looking upon the fairest. And as David here makes his prayer in the particular, against temptations of prosperity, so Christ teacheth us to make our prayer in the general, against the temptations, both of prosperity and adversity, and very justly. For many can bear the temptations of one kind, who are quickly overcome by temptations of the other kind. So David could bear persecution without murmuring, but when he came to prosperity he could not turn away his eyes from vanity.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

*Verse* 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" An ugly object loses much of its deformity when we look often upon it. Sin follows this general law, and is to be avoided altogether, even in its contemplation, if we would be safe. A man should be thankful in this world that he has

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eyelids; and as he can close his eyes, so he should often do it.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 37.—"*Turn away,*" then "*quicken,*" etc. The first request is for the removing the impediments of obedience, the other for the addition of new degrees of grace. These two are fitly joined, for they have a natural influence upon one another; unless we turn away our eyes from vanity, we shall soon contract deadness of heart. Nothing causeth it so much as an inordinate liberty in carnal vanities; when our affections are alive to other things, they are dead to God, therefore the less we let loose our hearts to these things, the more lively and cheerful in the work of obedience. On the other side, the more the vigour of grace is renewed, and the habits of it quickened into actual exercise, the more is sin mortified and subdued. Sin dieth, and our senses are restored to their proper use.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" That sin may be avoided we must avoid whatsoever leads to or occasions it. As this caused Job (ch. xxxi. 1) to covenant strongly with his eyes, so it caused David to pray earnestly about his eyes. "*Turn away mine eyes* (or as the Hebrew may be rendered, *make them to pass*), *from beholding vanity.*" The eye is apt to make a stand, or fix itself, when we come in view of an ensnaring object; therefore it is our duty to hasten it away, or to pray that God would make it pass off from it. . . . He that feareth burning must take heed of playing with fire: he that feareth drowning must keep out of deep waters. He that feareth the plague must not go into an infected house. Would they avoid sin who present themselves to the opportunities of it?—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse* 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes.*" Lest looking cause liking and lusting: 1 John ii. 16. In Hebrew the same word signifieth both an *eye* and a *fountain;* to show that from the eye, as from a fountain, floweth much mischief; and by that window Satan often winds himself into the soul. This David found by experience, and therefore prays here, "*Turn away,*" transfer, make to pass "*mine eyes,*" etc. He knew the danger of irregular glancing and inordinate gazing.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" It is a most dangerous experiment for a child of God to place himself within the sphere of seductive temptations. Every feeling of duty, every recollection of his own weakness, every remembrance of the failure of others, should induce him to hasten to the greatest possible distance from the scene of unnecessary conflict and danger.—*John Morison.*

*Verse* 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" From gazing at the delusive *mirages* which tempt the pilgrim to leave the safe highway.—*William Kay.*

*Verse* 37.—Is it asked—"What will most effectually turn my eyes from vanity?" Not the seclusion of contemplative retirement—not the relinquishment of our lawful connexion with the world—but the transcendent beauty of Jesus unveiled to our eyes, and fixing our hearts.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes,*" etc. The fort-royal of your souls is in danger of a surprise while the outworks of your senses are unguarded. Your eyes, which may be floodgates to pour out tears, should not be casements to let in lusts. A careless eye is an index to a graceless heart. Remember, the whole world died by a wound in the eye. The eyes of a Christian should be like sunflowers, which are opened to no blaze but that of the sun.—*William Secker,* 1660.

*Verse* 37.—"*Vanity,*" in Hebrew usage, has often special reference to idols and the accompaniments of idol worship. The Psalmist prays that he may never be permitted even to see such tempting objects.—*Henry Cowles.*

*Verse* 37.—"*Quicken thou me.*" Every saint is very apt to be a sluggard in the way and work of God. "*Quicken me,*" says one of the chiefest and choicest of saints, "*in thy way*"; and it is as much as if he should say

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in plain terms, "Ah, Lord! I am a dull jade, and have often need of thy spur, thy Spirit." This prayer of David seems proof enough to this point; but if you desire farther confirmation, I shall produce an argument *instar omnium*, "that none shall dare to deny, nor be able to disapprove"; and that is drawn from the topic of your own experience; and this is *argumentum lugubre*, like a funeral anthem, "very sad and sorrowful." Do you not feel and find, to the grief of your own souls, that, whereas you should weep as if you wept not, rejoice as if you rejoiced not, and buy as if you possessed not; *inverso ordine*, ["inverting this order,"] you weep for losses as if you would weep out your eyes; you rejoice in temporal comforts as if you were in heaven; and you buy as if it were for ever and a day (Ps. xlix. 11). But *e contrario*, ["on the contrary,"] you pray as if you prayed not; hear as if you heard not; work for God as if you worked not. Now, we know, *experto credas*,* a man that sticks fast in a ditch needs no reason to prove he is in, but remedies to pull him out. Your best course will be to propose the case how you may get rid of this unwelcome guest, spiritual sloth: it is a case we are all concerned in. *Asini aures quis non habet?* † Every man and mortal hath some of the ass's dulness and sloth in him.—*Mr. Simmons, in "The Morning Exercises,"* 1661.

*Verse* 37.—"*Quicken thou me.*" Another quickening ordinance is *prayer*. How often doth David pray for quickening grace? five or six times in one psalm. He begins many a prayer with a heavy heart, and before he hath done he is full of life. Therefore, pray much, because all life is from God, and he quickens whom he will. Only let me add this caution, before I let this pass,—Be sure thy understanding and affection go along together in every ordinance, and in every part of the ordinance, as thou wouldst have it a quickening ordinance.—*Matthew Lawrence, in "The Use and Practice of Faith,"* 1657.

*Verse* 37.—"*Thy way,*" by way of emphasis, in opposition to and exaltation of, above, all other ways. There is a fourfold way:—1. *Via mundi*, the way of the world; and that is *spinosa*, thorny. 2. *Via carnis*, the way of the flesh; and that is *insidiosa*, treacherous. 3. *Via Satana*, the way of the devil; and that is *tenebricosa*, darksome. 4. *Via Domini*, the way of God; and that is *gratiosa*, gracious.—*Simmons.*

*Verses* 37, 38.—Prayer is nothing but the promise reversed, or God's word formed into an argument, and retorted by faith upon God again. Know, Christian, thou hast law on thy side. Bills and bonds must be paid. David prays against the sins of a wanton eye and a dead heart: "*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way*"; and see how he urgeth his argument in the next words,—"*Stablish thy word unto thy servant.*" A good man is as good as his word, and will not a good God be so? But where finds David such a word for help against these sins? Surely in the covenant. It is in the magna charta. The first promise held forth thus much,—"The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse* 38.—"*Stablish thy word unto thy servant,*" etc.—Well, but here is a strange thing—a man who is a true "*servant of God,*" "*devoted to his fear,*" praying for what he surely must already have, else how could he be a servant? or be living in Jehovah's fear? He seems to assume, clearly and without any doubt, his own personal consecration, and then he prays for that which must surely be, at least in considerable measure, assumed and comprehended in the very idea of a true personal consecration. Unless God's word is made sure to a man he will never become his servant. If he

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* "You may yield credence to that of which you have made trial."
† "Where is the man who hath not the ears of an ass?"

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*is* his servant, why should he pray, "*Stablish thy word*"? Why, too, should he say in the thirty-fifth verse, "*Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight*"? "Therein do I delight. It is the way of my choice, of my joy!" And yet, "Make me to go in it," as if I were unwilling. This apparent contradiction or discrepancy is easily solved in a true experience, and can be, in fact, solved in no other way. Is not this the very condition of many and many a one? "*Stablished*," yet moved; "*devoted*," yet uncertain; "*serving*" God truly, yet looking and longing for clearer warrant, and higher sanction, and more inward grace, to make the service better; "believing," yet crying, sometimes, "with tears, Help thou mine unbelief!"—*Alexander Raleigh.*

*Verse* 38.—"*Stablish thy word unto thy servant.*" Why doth David pray thus, "*Stablish thy word to me;*" since God's word is most certain and so stable in itself that it cannot be more so? (2 Pet. i. 19). "We have a more sure," or a more stable, "word of prophecy," as the word signifies. How can the word be more stable than it is? I answer, it is sure in regard of God from whom it comes, and in itself. In regard of the things propounded it cannot be more or less stable, it cannot be fast and loose: but in regard of us, it may be more or less established. And that two ways,—1. By the inward assurance of the Spirit increasing our faith. 2. By the outward performance of what is promised.

1st, By the inward assurance of the Spirit, by which our faith is increased. Great is the weakness of our faith, as appears by our fears, doubts, distrusts, so that we need to be assured more and more. We need say with tears as he doth in the gospel: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark ix. 24); and to cry out with the apostles, "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke xvii. 5). There is none believeth so, but he may yet believe more. And in this sense the word is more established, when we are confirmed in the belief of it, and look upon it as sure ground for faith to rest upon. 2ndly, By actual performance, when the promise is made good to us. Every event which falls out according to the word is a notable testimony of the truth of it, and a seal to confirm and strengthen our faith. Three ways may this be made good.

1. The making good of some promises at one time strengthens our faith in expecting the like favour at another. Christ was angry with his disciples for not remembering the miracle of the loaves, when they fell into a like strait again. "Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves?" (Matt. xvi. 9). We are to seek upon every difficulty; whereas former experience in the same kind should be a means of establishment to us: "He hath delivered, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us" (2 Cor. i. 10). In teaching a child to spell we are angry, if, when we have showed him a letter once, twice, and a third time, yet when he meets with it again still he misseth: so, God is angry with us when we have had experience of his word in this, that, and the other providence, yet still our doubts return upon us.

2. The accomplishment of one promise confirms another; for God, that keepeth touch at one time, will do so at another: "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom." (2 Tim. iv. 17, 18). In such a strait God failed not, and surely he that hath been true hitherto will not fail at last.

3. When the word is performed in part, it assureth us of the performance of the whole. It is an earnest given us of all the rest: "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen" (2 Cor. i. 20). A Christian hath a great many promises, and they are being performed daily; God is delivering, comforting, protecting him, speaking peace to his conscience; but the greater part are yet to be performed. Present experiences do assure us of what is to come. Thus, "*Stablish thy word*," that is, make it good

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by the event, that I may learn to trust another time either for the same, or other promises or accomplishments of thy whole word.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 38.—"*Stablish thy word unto thy servant.*" Confirm it; make it *seem* firm and true; let not my mind be vacillating or sceptical in regard to thy truth. This seems to be a prayer against the influence of doubt and scepticism; a prayer that doubts might not be suffered to spring up in his mind, and that the objections and difficulties of scepticism might have no place there. There is a class of men whose minds are naturally sceptical and unbelieving, and for such men such a prayer is peculiarly appropriate. For none can it be improper to pray that the word of God may always seem to them to be true; that their minds may never be left to the influence of doubt and unbelief.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 38.—"*Who is devoted to thy fear.*" The word may be rendered either which or who; as relating either to thy word or to thy servant. 1. Thy word; for in the original Hebrew the posture of the verse is thus, "Stablish to thy servant thy word, which is to the fearing of thee," or, "which is given that thou mayest be feared;" there being in the word of God the greatest arguments and inducements to fear, to reverence, and to obey him. The word of God was appointed to plant the fear of God in our hearts, and to increase our reverence of God; not that we may play the wantons with promises, and feed our lusts with them. 2. I rather take our own translation, and it hath such a sense as that passage, "But I give myself unto prayer" (Psalm cxix. 4). In the original it is, "But I prayer." So in this place it may be read, Stablish thy word to thy servant, "Who is to thy fear." Our translators add, to make the sense more full, addicted, or "devoted to thy fear," that is, who makes it his business, care, and desire to stand in the fear of God.

Now this is added as a true note and description of God's servants, as being a main thing in religion, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm cxi. 10), it is the first in point of order, and it is the first thing when we begin to be wise, to think of God, to have awful thoughts of God, it is a chief point of wisdom, the great thing that makes us wise to salvation. And it is added as an argument of prayer, "O Lord, let thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name" (Neh. i. 11). The more any are given to the fear of God, the more assurance they have of God's love, and of his readiness to hear them at the throne of grace.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 38.—"*Who is devoted to thy fear.*" He who hath received from the Lord grace to fear him may be bold to seek any necessary good thing from him; because the fear of God hath annexed the promises of all other blessings with it.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 38.—He that chooses God, devotes himself to God as the vessels of the sanctuary were consecrated and set apart from common to holy uses, so he that has chosen God to be his God, has dedicated himself to God, and will no more be devoted to profane uses.—*Thomas Watson.*

*Verse* 39.—"*Turn away my reproach,*" etc. In these words you have,—1. A request, "*Turn away my reproach.*" 2. A reason to enforce it. "*For thy judgments are good.*"

First, for the request. "*Turn away,*" roll from upon me, so it signifies. He was clothed with reproach; now roll from me "*my reproach.*" Some think he means God's condemnatory sentence, which would turn to his reproach, or some remarkable rebuke from God, because of his sin. Rather, I think, the calumnies of his enemies; and he calls it "*my reproach,*" either as deserved by himself, or as having personally lighted upon him, the reproach which was like to be his lot and portion in the world, through the malice of his enemies: "*the reproach which I fear,*" that is, which I have cause to expect, and am sensible of the sad consequences of it.

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Secondly, for the reason by which this is enforced: "*for thy judgments are good.*" There are different opinions about the form of this argument. Some take the reason thus: Let me not suffer reproach for adhering to thy word, thy word which is so good. But David doth not speak here of suffering reproach for righteousness' sake, but such reproach as was likely to befal him because of his own infirmities and failings. Reproaches for righteousness' sake are to be "rejoiced in;" but he saith, this I "*fear*," and therefore I suppose this doth not hit the reason. Neither do I accept the other sense, —Why should I be looked upon as an evil-doer as long as I keep thy law, and observe thy statutes? Others judge badly of me, but I appeal to thy good judgment.

By "*judgments*" we may understand God's dealings. Thou dost not deal with men according to their desert. Thy dispensations are kind and gracious. Better still: by "*judgments*" are meant the ways, statutes, and ordinances of God called judgments, because all our words, works, thoughts are to be judged according to the sentence of the word: now these, it is a pity they should suffer in my reproach and ignominy. This is that I fear more than anything else that can happen to me. I think the reason will better run thus: Lord, there is in thy law, word, covenant, many promises to encourage thy people, and therefore rules to provide for the due honour and credit of thy people.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 39.—"*Turn away my reproach.*" In the Hebrew it is, "*Take away my rebuke*"; as if he should have said, O Lord, I may commit some such evil against thy good law, yea, some such notorious transgression, as may tend to my shame; I beseech thee, take it away. Or else he meaneth, I have already, O Lord, by divers sins, and by name through adultery and murder brought shame and rebuke upon myself among men; I entreat thee to remove this shame and rebuke.

Out of the first exposition we learn, First, that the godly are subject unto notorious sins. Secondly, that those sins will cause shame in them, though the wicked will not be ashamed. Thirdly, that God only can take away this shame. Fourthly, that we may pray for the removing of shame even amongst men, especially that which may bring with it some dishonour to God. Fifthly, that the godly are most jealous over themselves. Sixthly, the way to avoid sin is ever to be afraid lest we should sin.

Out of the second exposition note, that the remembrance of our former sins must draw out of us prayers unto God, that for them we may not be rebuked in displeasure in this life, nor confounded and abashed in the life to come.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 39.—"*My reproach*" is the reproach which the world casts on the God-fearing. This is dreaded as a great temptation to apostacy.—*James G. Murphy.*

*Verse* 39.—"*For thy judgments are good.*" One would have expected him to say—For thou art merciful—Cause my reproach which I fear to pass over from me, for thou art merciful. No, he does not add this as his present reason, but "*Thy judgments are good.*" We should catch the meaning at once, were the words these—For thy judgments are *awful*—"Turn away my reproach which I fear," for thy judgments are awful. But as the words are—"For thy judgments are *good*," we find he verily takes refuge in the "judgments"—viz., that the Lord would vindicate him against all the unjust judgments of men; and as to judgment with God, since he took refuge in the atonement which the Lord had appointed, the Lord would vindicate him there also.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 39.—"*For thy judgments are good.*" The judgments of the wicked are bad judgments, but the judgments of God are good; I pray against those, I appeal, to these: I fear the one, I approve the other. Now the judgments which God pronounceth in his word, be they threatenings in the law, or consolations in the Gospel, yea, and those also which he executeth

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in the world, whether upon the godly or godless, they must needs be good. 1, Because God is goodness itself. 2, He cannot be deceived. 3, He will not be bribed. 4, He alone is no respecter of persons, but judgeth according to every man's work.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 39.—The "*reproach*" which the poet fears in this verse is not the reproach of confessing, but of denying God.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

*Verse* 39.—"*For thy judgments are good.*" This reason shows he feared God's rebuke. Man's "*reproach*" comes from a corrupt judgment, he condemns where God will absolve, I pass not for it; but I know thy rebuke is always deserved, "*for thy judgments are good.*"—*William Nicholson.*

*Verse* 40.—"*I have longed after thy precepts.*" We are sometimes unconsciously led to "*long*" after the promises, more than "*after the precepts*" of God; forgetting that it is our privilege and safety to have an equal regard to both—to obey his precepts in dependence on his promises, and to expect the accomplishment of the promises in the way of obedience to the precepts. —*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 40.—"*Precepts,*" from a word which means *to place in trust*, mean something entrusted to man, "that which is committed to thee"; appointments of God, which consequently have to do with the conscience, for which man is responsible, as an intelligent being. The precepts are not so obviously apprehended as the law and the testimonies. They must be sought out. "*Behold, my desire is for thy precepts*" (ver. 40). "*Thy precepts I seek*" (ver. 45). "*Thy precepts I have sought*" (ver. 94). . . . They are a law of liberty: "*And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts*" (ver. 45).—*John Jebb.*

*Verse* 40.—"*Quicken me in thy righteousness.*" He said before, "Quicken me in thy word," here, "in thy righteousness"; all is one; for the word of God is the righteousness of God, in which is set down the will of righteousness. In this the prophet desires to be quickened, that is, to be confirmed, that in cheerfulness and gladness of spirit he might rely upon the word of God.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 40.—"*Quicken me in thy righteousness.*" The petition is for liveliness in the knowledge and practice of holiness, according to the tenor of God's word and by its operation on the heart. If any prefer by "*righteousness*" to understand the faithfulness or justice of God, whereby he has bound himself to give grace to those who trust in him, there is no objection to such an interpretation. It is in fact implied in the others. Whoever can truly use the language of this verse is regenerate. Before renewing grace the law was a dead letter. It was more; it was a hated letter. The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. A sinner desires no restraint from the divine precepts.—*William S. Plumer.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 41 TO 48.

LET thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, *even* thy salvation, according to thy word.

42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments.

44 So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.

45 And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.

46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

In these verses holy fear is apparent and prominent. The man of God trembles lest in any way or degree the Lord should remove his favour from him. The eight verses are one continued pleading for the abiding of grace in his soul, and it is supported by such holy arguments as would only suggest themselves to a spirit burning with love to God.

41. "*Let thy mercies come also unto me, O* LORD." He desires *mercy* as well as teaching, for he was guilty as well as ignorant. He needed much mercy and varied mercy, hence the request is in the plural. He needed mercy from God rather than from man, and so he asks for "thy mercies." The way sometimes seemed blocked, and therefore he begs that the mercies may have their way cleared by God, and may "come" to him. He who said, "Let there be light," can also say, "Let there be mercy." It may be that under a sense of unworthiness the writer feared lest mercy should be given to others, and not to himself; he therefore cries, "Bless me, even me also, O my Father." Viewed in this light the words are tantamount to our well-known verse—

> "Lord, I hear of showers of blessing
> Thou art scattering, full and free;
> Showers, the thirsty land refreshing;
> Let some droppings fall on me,
> Even me." —*Elizabeth Codner*, 1860.

Lord, thine enemies come to me to reproach me, let thy mercies come to defend me; trials and troubles abound, and labours and sufferings not a few approach me; Lord, let thy mercies in great number enter by the same gate, and at the same hour; for art thou not the God of my mercy?

"*Even thy salvation.*" This is the sum and crown of all mercies—deliverance from all evil, both now and for ever. Here is the first mention of salvation in the psalm, and it is joined with mercy: "By grace are ye saved." Salvation is styled "thy salvation," thus ascribing it wholly to the Lord: "He that is our God is the God of salvation." What a mass of mercies are heaped together in the one salvation of our Lord Jesus! It includes the mercies which spare us before our conversion, and lead up to it. Then comes calling mercy, regenerating mercy, converting mercy, justifying mercy, pardoning mercy. Nor can we exclude from complete salvation any of those many mercies which are needed to conduct the believer safe to glory. Salvation is an aggregate of mercies incalculable in number, priceless in value, incessant in application, eternal in endurance. To the God of our mercies be glory, world without end.



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"*According to thy word.*" The way of salvation is described in the word, salvation itself is promised in the word, and its inward manifestation is wrought by the word; so that in all respects the salvation which is in Christ Jesus is in accordance with the word. David loved the Scriptures, but he longed experimentally to know the salvation contained in them: he was not satisfied to read the word, he longed to experience its inner sense. He valued the field of Scripture for the sake of the treasure which he had discovered in it. He was not to be contented with chapter and verse, he wanted mercies and salvation.

Note that in the first verse of HE (33) the Psalmist prayed to be taught to keep God's word, and here in VAU he begs the Lord to keep his word. In the first case he longed to come to the God of mercies, and here he would have the Lord's mercies come to him: there he sought grace to persevere in faith, and here he seeks the end of his faith, even the salvation of the soul.

42. "*So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me.*" This is an unanswerable answer. When God, by granting us salvation, gives to our prayers an answer of peace, we are ready at once to answer the objections of the infidel, the quibbles of the sceptical, and the sneers of the contemptuous. It is most desirable that revilers should be answered, and hence we may expect the Lord to save his people in order that a weapon may be put into their hands with which to rout his adversaries. When those who reproach *us* are also reproaching God, we may ask him to help us to silence them by sure proofs of his mercy and faithfulness.

"*For I trust in thy word.*" His faith was seen by his being trustful while under trial, and he pleads it as a reason why he should be helped to beat back reproaches by a happy experience. Faith is our argument when we seek mercies and salvation; faith in the Lord who has spoken to us in his word. "I trust in thy word" is a declaration more worth the making than any other; for he who can truly make it has received power to become a child of God, and so to be the heir of unnumbered mercies. God hath more respect to a man's trust than to all else that is in him; for the Lord hath chosen faith to be the hand into which he will place his mercies and his salvation. If any reproach us for trusting in God, we reply to them with arguments the most conclusive when we show that God has kept his promises, heard our prayers, and supplied our needs. Even the most sceptical are forced to bow before the logic of facts.

In this second verse of this eight the Psalmist makes a confession of faith, and a declaration of his belief and experience. Note that he does the same in the corresponding verses of the sections which follow. See 50, "Thy word hath quickened me"; 58, "I entreated thy favour"; 66, "I have believed thy commandments"; 74, "I have hoped in thy word." A wise preacher might find in these a series of experimental discourses.

43. "*And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.*" Do not prevent my pleading for thee by leaving me without deliverance; for how could I continue to proclaim thy word if I found it fail me? such would seem to be the run of the meaning. The word of truth cannot be a joy to our mouths unless we have an experience of it in our lives, and it may be wise for us to be silent if we cannot support our testimonies by the verdict of our consciousness. This prayer may also refer to other modes by which we may be disabled from speaking in the name of the Lord: as, for instance, by our falling into open sin, by our becoming depressed and despairing, by our labouring under sickness or mental aberration, by our finding no door of utterance, or meeting with no willing audience. He who has once preached the gospel from his heart is filled with horror at the idea of being put out of the ministry; he will crave to be allowed a little share in the holy testimony, and will reckon his dumb Sabbaths to be days of banishment and punishment.

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"*For I have hoped in thy judgments.*" He had expected God to appear and vindicate his cause, that so he might speak with confidence concerning his faithfulness. God is the author of our hopes, and we may most fittingly entreat him to fulfil them. The judgments of his providence are the outcome of his word; what he says in the Scriptures he actually performs in his government; we may therefore look for him to show himself strong on the behalf of his own threatenings and promises, and we shall not look in vain.

God's ministers are sometimes silenced through the sins of their people, and it becomes them to plead against such a judgment; better far that they should suffer sickness or poverty than that the candle of the gospel should be put out among them, and that thus they should be left to perish without remedy. The Lord save us, who are his ministers, from being made the instruments of inflicting such a penalty. Let us exhibit a cheerful hopefulness in God, that we may plead it in prayer with him when he threatens to close our lips.

In the close of this verse there is a declaration of what the Psalmist had done in reference to the word of the Lord, and in this the thirds of the octaves are often alike. See 35, "therein do I delight"; 43, "I have hoped in thy judgments"; 51, "yet have I not declined from thy law"; 59, "I turned my feet to thy testimonies"; and verses 67, 83, 99, etc. These verses would furnish an admirable series of meditations.

44. "*So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.*" Nothing more effectually binds a man to the way of the Lord than an experience of the truth of his word, embodied in the form of mercies and deliverances. Not only does the Lord's faithfulness open our mouths against his adversaries, but it also knits our hearts to his fear, and makes our union with him more and more intense. Great mercies lead us to feel an inexpressible gratitude which, failing to utter itself in time, promises to engross eternity with praises. To a heart on flame with thankfulness, the "always, unto eternity and perpetuity," of the text will not seem to be redundant; yea, the hyperbole of Addison in his famous verse will only appear to be solid sense:—

> "Through all eternity to thee
> A joyful song I'll raise;
> But oh! eternity's too short
> To utter all thy praise."
>
> —*Addison.*

God's grace alone can enable us to keep his commandments without break and without end; eternal love must grant us eternal life, and out of this will come everlasting obedience. There is no other way to ensure our perseverance in holiness but by the word of truth abiding in us, as David prayed it might abide with him.

The verse begins with "So," as did verse 42. When God grants his salvation we are *so* favoured that we silence our worst enemy and glorify our best friend. Mercy answereth all things. If God doth but give us salvation we can conquer hell and commune with heaven, answering reproaches and keeping the law, and that to the end, world without end.

We may not overlook another sense which suggests itself here. David prayed that the word of truth might not be taken out of his mouth, and so would he keep God's law: that is to say, by public testimony as well as by personal life, he would fulfil the divine will, and confirm the bonds which bound him to his Lord for ever. Undoubtedly the grace which enables us to bear witness with the mouth is a great help to ourselves as well as to others: we feel that the vows of the Lord are upon us, and that we cannot run back.

45. "*And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.*" Saints find no bondage in sanctity. The Spirit of holiness is a free spirit; he sets men at liberty and enables them to resist every effort to bring them under subjection. The way of holiness is not a track for slaves, but the King's highway

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for freemen, who are joyfully journeying from the Egypt of bondage to the Canaan of rest. God's mercies and his salvation, by teaching us to love the precepts of the word, set us at a happy rest; and the more we seek after the perfection of our obedience the more shall we enjoy complete emancipation from every form of spiritual slavery. David at one time of his life was in great bondage through having followed a crooked policy. He deceived Achish so persistently that he was driven to acts of ferocity to conceal it, and must have felt very unhappy in his unnatural position as an ally of Philistines, and captain of the body guard of their king. He must have feared lest through his falling into the crooked ways of falsehood the truth would no longer be on his tongue, and he therefore prayed God in some way to work his deliverance, and set him at liberty from such slavery. By terrible things in righteousness did the Lord answer him at Ziklag: the snare was broken, and he escaped.

The verse is united to that which goes before, for it begins with the word "And," which acts as a hook to attach it to the preceding verses. It mentions another of the benefits expected from the coming of mercies from God. The man of God had mentioned the silencing of his enemies (42), power to proceed in testimony (43), and perseverance in holiness; now he dwells upon liberty, which next to life is dearest to all brave men. He says, "I shall walk," indicating his daily progress through life; "at liberty," as one who is out of prison, unimpeded by adversaries, unencumbered by burdens, unshackled, allowed a wide range, and roaming without fear. Such liberty would be dangerous if a man were seeking himself or his own lusts; but when the one object sought after is the will of God, there can be no need to restrain the searcher. We need not circumscribe the man who can say, "I seek thy precepts." Observe, in the preceding verse he said he would keep the law; but here he speaks of seeking it. Does he not mean that he will obey what he knows, and endeavour to know more? Is not this the way to the highest form of liberty,—to be always labouring to know the mind of God and to be conformed to it? Those who *keep* the law are sure to *seek* it, and bestir themselves to keep it more and more.

46. "*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.*" This is part of his liberty; he is free from fear of the greatest, proudest, and most tyrannical of men. David was called to stand before kings when he was an exile; and afterwards, when he was himself a monarch, he knew the tendency of men to sacrifice their religion to pomp and statecraft; but it was his resolve to do nothing of the kind. He would sanctify politics, and make cabinets know that the Lord alone is governor among the nations. As a king he would speak to kings concerning the King of kings. He says, "*I will speak*": prudence might have suggested that his life and conduct would be enough, and that it would be better not to touch upon religion in the presence of royal personages who worshipped other gods, and claimed to be right in so doing. He had already most fittingly preceded this resolve by the declaration, "I will walk," but he does not make his personal conduct an excuse for sinful silence, for he adds, "I will speak." David claimed religious liberty, and took care to use it, for he spoke out what he believed, even when he was in the highest company. In what he said he took care to keep to God's own word, for he says, "I will speak of *thy testimonies.*" No theme is like this, and there is no way of handling that theme like keeping close to the book, and using its thought and language. The great hindrance to our speaking upon holy topics in all companies is shame, but the Psalmist will "*not be ashamed*"; there is nothing to be ashamed of, and there is no excuse for being ashamed, and yet many are as quiet as the dead for fear some creature like themselves should be offended. When God gives grace, cowardice soon vanishes. He who speaks for God in God's power, will not be ashamed

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when beginning to speak, nor while speaking, nor after speaking; for his theme is one which is fit for kings, needful to kings, and beneficial to kings. If kings object, we may well be ashamed of *them*, but never of our Master who sent us, or of his message, or of his design in sending it.

47. "*And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.*" Next to liberty and courage comes delight. When we have done our duty, we find a great reward in it. If David had not spoken for his Master before kings, he would have been afraid to think of the law which he had neglected; but after speaking up for his Lord he feels a sweet serenity of heart when musing upon the word. Obey the command, and you will love it; carry the yoke, and it will be easy, and rest will come by it. After speaking of the law the Psalmist was not wearied of his theme, but he retired to meditate upon it; he discoursed and then he delighted, he preached and then repaired to his study to renew his strength by feeding yet again upon the precious truth. Whether he delighted others or not when he was speaking, he never failed to delight himself when he was musing on the word of the Lord. He declares that he loved the Lord's commands, and by this avowal he unveils the reason for his delight in them: where our love is, there is our delight. David did not delight in the courts of kings, for there he found places of temptation to shame, but in the Scriptures he found himself at home; his heart was in them, and they yielded him supreme pleasure. No wonder that he spoke of keeping the law, which he loved; Jesus says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." No wonder that he spoke of walking at liberty, and speaking boldly, for true love is ever free and fearless. Love is the fulfilling of the law; where love to the law of God reigns in the heart the life must be full of blessedness. Lord, let thy mercies come to us that we may love thy word and way, and find our whole delight therein.

The verse is in the future, and hence it sets forth, not only what David had done, but what he would do; he would in time to come delight in his Lord's command. He knew that they would neither alter, nor fail to yield him joy. He knew also that grace would keep him in the same condition of heart towards the precepts of the Lord, so that he should throughout his whole life take a supreme delight in holiness. His heart was so fixed in love to God's will that he was sure that grace would always hold him under its delightful influence.

All the psalm is fragrant with love to the word, but here for the first time love is expressly spoken of. It is here coupled with delight, and in verse 165 with "great peace." All the verses in which love declares itself in so many words are worthy of note. See verses 47, 97, 113, 119, 127, 140, 159, 163, 165, 167.

48. "*My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved.*" He will stretch out towards perfection as far as he can, hoping to reach it one day; when his hands hang down he will cheer himself out of languor by the prospect of glorifying God by obedience; and he will give solemn sign of his hearty assent and consent to all that his God commands. The phrase "lift up my hands" is very full of meaning, and doubtless the sweet singer meant all that we can see in it, and a great deal more. Again he declares his love; for a true heart loves to express itself; it is a kind of fire which must send forth its flames. It was natural that he should reach out towards a law which he delighted in, even as a child holds out its hands to receive a gift which it longs for. When such a lovely object as holiness is set before us, we are bound to rise towards it with our whole nature, and till that is fully accomplished we should at least lift up our hands in prayer towards it. Where holy hands and holy hearts go, the whole man will one day follow.

"*And I will meditate in thy statutes.*" He can never have enough of meditation upon the mind of God. Loving subjects wish to be familiar

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with their sovereign's statutes, for they are anxious that they may not offend through ignorance. Prayer with lifted hands, and meditation with upward-glancing eyes will in happy union work out the best inward results. The prayer of verse 41 is already fulfilled in the man who is thus struggling upward and studying deeply. The whole of this verse is in the future, and may be viewed not only as a determination of David's mind, but as a result which he knew would follow from the Lord's sending him his mercies and his salvation. When mercy comes down, our hands will be lifted up; when God in favour thinks upon us, we are sure to think of him. Happy is he who stands with hands uplifted both to receive the blessing and to obey the precept; he shall not wait upon the Lord in vain.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 41 TO 48.

*Verses* 41—48.—This commences a new portion of the psalm, in which each verse begins with the letter *Vau*, or *v*. There are almost no words in Hebrew that begin with this letter, which is properly a conjunction, and hence in each of the verses in this section the beginning of the verse is in the original a conjunction,—*vau.*—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verses* 41—48.—This whole section consists of petitions and promises. The petitions are two; verses 41, 43. The promises are six. This, among many, is a difference between godly men and others: all men seek good things from God, but the wicked so seek that they give him nothing back again, nor yet will promise any sort of return. Their prayers must be unprofitable, because they proceed from love of themselves, and not of the Lord. If so be they obtain that which is for their neccssity, they care not to give to the Lord that which is for his glory: but the godly, as they seek good things, so they give praise to God when they have gotten them, and return the use of things received, to the glory of God who gave them. They love not themselves for themselves, but for the Lord; what they seek from him they seek it for this end, that they may be the more able to serve him. Let us take heed unto this; because it is a clear token whereby such as are truly religious are distinguished from counterfeit dissemblers.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 41.—"*Let thy mercies come also unto me.*" The way was blocked up with sins and difficulties, yet mercy could clear all, and find access to him, or make its own way: "*Let it come,*" that is, let it be performed or come to pass, as it is rendered: "Now let thy words come to pass" (Judg. xiii. 12) —Hebrew, "Let it come." Here we read, let it come home *to me*, for my comfort and deliverance. David elsewhere saith, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" (Psalm xxiii. 6); go after him, find him out in his wanderings. So, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits *toward me?*" (Psalm cxvi. 12). They found their way to him though shut up with sins and dangers.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 41.—"*Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord.*" The mercies of God everywhere meet the man whom God *quickens* (verse 40). David understood that God blesses the soul, the body, the household, the ordinances, and all things else that belong to his servants; the whole of which blessing is from mercy, without merit, bestowed largely, wonderfully, etc.—*Martin Geier.*

*Verse* 41.—"*Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord,*" etc. Ministers of the Word and students of Theology are reminded by this prayer that they ought not only to preach to others the true way of attaining everlasting salvation, but that they should also with earnest prayers cry unto God that they might themselves be made partakers of the Divine mercies, and receive "the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls." Paul, indeed, was greatly anxious respecting this matter, and was constrained to write, that he kept his body under, and brought it into subjection, lest after preaching to others he should himself be a castaway.—*Solomon Gesner.*

*Verse* 41.—"*Thy mercies.*" "*Thy word.*" We should consider here the way in which the Prophet seeks salvation from God. In this prayer he conjoins two things, as those which uphold his confidence, viz., the mercy of God and his Word. These are to the man of faith the two strongest pillars of his hope.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse* 41.—"*Even thy salvation,*" etc. It is not any sort of delivery by any means, which the servant of God being in straits doth call for, or desire, but such a deliverance as God will allow, and be pleased to give in a holy way. "*Let thy salvation come.*" As the word of promise is the rule of our petition, so is it a pawn of the thing promised, and must be held fast till the performance come: "*Let thy mercies come also unto me, O* LORD, *even*

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*thy salvation, according to thy word*"; and this is one reason of the petition. —*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 42.—"*So shall I have,*" etc. I shall have something by which I may reply to those who calumniate me. So the Saviour replied to the suggestions of the tempter almost wholly by passages of Scripture (Matthew iv. 4, 7, 10); and so, in many cases, the best answer that can be given to reproaches on the subject of religion will be found in the very words of Scripture. A man of little learning, except that which he has derived from the Bible, may often thus silence the cavils and reproaches of the learned sceptic; a man of simple-hearted, pure piety, with no weapon but the word of God, may often thus be better armed than if he had all the arguments of the schools at his command. Comp. Eph. vi. 17.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 42.—"*So shall I have wherewith to answer,*" etc. When the heart realizes assured salvation, it is supplied with abundant answers to those who sneer at the delights of faith.—*Henry Law.*

*Verse* 42.—"*So shall I have wherewith to answer,*" etc. Hugo Cardinalis observeth that there are three sorts of blasphemers of the godly,—the devils, heretics, and slanderers. The devil must be answered by the internal word of humility; heretics by the external word of wisdom; slanderers by the active word of a good life.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 42.—"*So shall I have,*" etc. For I should give them a short answer, and a true one,—*that I trust in thy word;* I put my confidence in thee, who canst make good thy promises, because thou art omnipotent; and wilt, because thou art merciful.—*William Nicholson.*

*Verse* 42.—"*So shall I have wherewith to answer,*" etc. This follows the phrase, "*according to thy word.*" Christians should learn from the example of David what to oppose to the reproaches and false accusations of the enemies of the truth. Nothing is done by railing; but weapons should be taken from the word of God; and these are strong through faith in God for the overturning of both the Devil himself and his instruments. For truly with weapons of this kind the Saviour himself discomfited Satan in the wilderness (Matt. iv.); and Paul (Ephes. vi.) puts on himself, and commends to the Christian soldier, the girdle of Divine truth, the breast-plate of righteousness, the shoes of the Gospel, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.—*Solomon Gesner.*

*Verse* 42.—"*Wherewith to answer,*" etc. It is not forbidden to believers, modestly and fully, *to answer* those that reproach them, and to rebut the lie. See Prov. xxvi. 5, xxvii. 11. But to be able to answer them is received as a blessing from God.—*Martin Geier.*

*Verses* 42, 43.—In verse 42 there is a play upon the two senses of the term "*word,*" thus: "and I will answer my revilers a word, for I have trusted in thy word." Having trusted in thy word of promise, I shall have a word of reply to make to them when thou shalt graciously hear this prayer. "*Take not thy word of truth*" (*i.e.*, of promise) "*out of my mouth*"; let me have it still to speak of before my enemies and to rest upon for my own soul. If God were to fail in fulfilling his word of promise, it would, in the sense here contemplated, be quite taken out of his mouth.—*Henry Cowles.*

*Verse* 43.—"*Take not the word of truth,*" etc. It is well known that men do, when persecution threatens, either altogether deny the truth, or weakly and lukewarmly confess it; but lest this should happen to him, David therefore prays here, "*O Lord, take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,*" *i.e.*, make me, with an intrepid spirit, always to confess the avowed truth boldly and manfully. In the Hebrew text it is עַד מְאֹד, "*very,*" "*very much,*" or, as Augustine renders it, "*wholly and altogether*"; and he thinks that David prayed for this, that, if through human weakness it should happen to him to fall, and at some time or other not steadfastly to confess the

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word, yet that God would not allow him to continue in that sin, but again restore and establish him; and he illustrates this by the example of Peter. Further, David adds the reason which has impelled him thus to pray: "*Because I hope for*," and even with great desire, as the Hebrew verb יחל signifies, "*thy judgments*," with which in the last day thou wilt openly pass sentence on heretics, fanatics, and all tyrants.—*Solomon Gesner.*

*Verse* 43.—"*Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.*" The word is taken out of the mouth, when it is said to the sinner, "*Wherefore dost thou declare thy statutes?*" And eloquence itself becomes dumb if the conscience be evil. The birds of heaven come and take the word out of thy mouth, even as they took the seed of the word from off the rock lest it should bring forth fruit.—*Ambrose.*

*Verse* 43.—*The word is also taken out of our mouth* when in strong temptations all things, as it were, fail, neither can we discover where we may make a stand: Psalm lxix. 2.—*Martin Geier.*

*Verse* 43.—"*Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.*" Sometimes we are afraid to speak for the Saviour, lest we should incur the charge of hypocrisy. At other times we are ashamed to speak, from the absence of that only constraining principle—"the love of Christ." And thus "*the word of truth is taken out of our mouths.*" Often have we wanted a word to speak for the relief of the Lord's tempted people, and have not been able to find it; so that the recollection of precious lost opportunities may well give utterance to the prayer—"*Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.*" Not only do not take it out of my heart; but let it be ready in my mouth for a confession of my Master. Some of us know the painful trial of the indulgence of worldly habits and conversation, when a want of liberty of spirit has hindered us from standing up boldly for our God. We may perhaps allege the plea of bashfulness or judicious caution in excuse for silence; which however, in many instances, we must regard as a self-deceptive covering for the real cause of restraint—the want of apprehension of the mercy of God to the soul.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 43.—"*Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.*" Oh, what service can a dumb body do in Christ's house! Oh, I think the word of God is imprisoned also! Oh, I am a dry tree! Alas, I can neither plant nor water! Oh, if my Lord would make but dung of me, to fatten and make fertile his own corn-ridges in Mount Zion! Oh, if I might but speak to three or four herd-boys of my worthy Master, I would be satisfied to be the meanest and most obscure of all the pastors in this land, and to live in any place, in any of Christ's basest outhouses! But he saith, "Sirrah, I will not send you; I have no errands for you there away." My desire to serve him is sick of jealousy, lest he be unwilling to employ me. . . . . I am very well every way, all praise to him in whose books I must stand for ever as his debtor! Only my silence paineth me. I had one joy out of heaven, next to Christ my Lord, and that was to preach him to this faithless generation; and they have taken that from me. It was to me as the poor man's one eye, and they have put out that eye.—*Samuel Rutherford.*

*Verse* 43.—"*For I have hoped in thy judgments*," the word משפטים, *judgment*, signifieth either the law, or the execution of the sentence thereof.

1. The law or whole word of God; so that, "*I have hoped in thy judgments*," is no more, but in thy word do I hope; as it is, "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope" (Ps. cxxx. 5).

2. Answerable execution of the law, when the promise or threatening is fulfilled. (1.) When the promise is fulfilled: that is judgment in a sense when God accomplisheth what he hath promised for our salvation and deliverance. Thus God is said to judge his people, when he righteth and saveth them according to his word: "O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong: judge thou my cause" (Lam. iii. 59). (2.) But the more usual notion of judgment is the execution of the threatening on wicked men; which being

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a benefit to God's faithful servants, and done in their favour, David might well be said to hope for it. Their "judgment" is our obtaining the promise. —*Thomas Manton.*

*Verses* 43, 44.—Lord, let me have the word of truth in "*my mouth*" that I may commit that sacred *depositum* to the rising generation (2 Tim. ii. 22), and by them it may be transmitted to succeeding ages; so shall "*thy law*" be kept "*for ever and ever*," *i.e.*, from one generation to another, according to that promise (Isai. lix. 21): "My words in thy mouth shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed."—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 44.—"*So shall I keep thy law continually*," etc. The Lord's keeping our heart in faith, and our mouth and outward man in the course of confession and obedience, is the cause of our perseverance.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 44.—"*So shall I keep.*" Mark, the promise of obedience is brought in by way of argument; "*So shall I keep*," "*so*," that is, this will encourage me, this will enable me.

1st, The granting of his requests would give him encouragement: when God answers our hope and expectation, gratitude should excite and quicken us to give all manner of obedience. If he will give us a heart, and a little liberty to confess his name, and serve him, we should not be backward or uncertain, but walk closely with him.

2ndly, This would give him assistance and strength. If God do daily give assistance, we shall stand; if not, we fall and falter; this will be a means of his perseverance, not only to engage and oblige him, but to help him to hold on to the end.

Then mark the constancy of this obedience, "*Continually, and for ever and ever.*" David would not keep it for a fit, or for a few days, or a year, but always, even to the end of his life. Here are three words to the same sense: "*continually*," "*for ever*," "*and ever.*" And the Septuagint expresses it thus: "I shall keep thy law always, and for ever, and for ever, and ever;" four words there. This heaping of words is not in vain.

1. It shows the difficulty of perseverance: unless believers do strongly persist in the resistance of temptation, they will soon be turned out of the way; therefore David binds his heart firmly: we must do it now, yea, always, unto the end.

2. He expresseth his vehemence of affection: those that are deeply affected with anything are wont to express themselves as largely as they can. As Paul, who had a deep sense of God's power: "Exceeding greatness of his power, according to the working of his mighty power" (Eph. i. 19). He heaps up several words, because his sense of them was so great: so David here doth heap up words—"*continually, and for ever, and ever, and ever.*"

3. Some think the words are so many, that they may express not only this life, but that which is to come. I will keep them continually, and for ever, and ever; that is, all the days of my life, and in the other world. So Chrysostom, "I will keep them continually," &c., points out the other life, where there will be pure and exact keeping of the law of God. Here we are every hour in danger, but then we shall be put out of all danger, and without fear of sinning, we shall remain in a full and perfect righteousness; we hope for that which we have not attained unto, and this doth encourage us for the present: so would he make David express himself.

4. If we must distinguish these words, I suppose they imply the continuity and perpetuity of obedience; the continuity of obedience, that he would serve God continually, without intermission; and the perpetuity of obedience, that he would serve God for ever and ever, without defection or revolt, at all times, and to the end. Constancy and perseverance in obedience is the commendation of it.—*Thomas Manton.*

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*Verse* 44.—"*So shall I keep thy law continually.*" That is, if thou wilt not take the word of thy truth out of my mouth, "*I will alway keep thy law.*" "*Yea, unto age, and age of age:*" he showeth what is meant by *alway*. For sometimes by "*alway*" is meant, as long as we live here; but this is not, "*unto age, and age of age.*" For it is better thus translated than as some copies have, "*to eternity, and to age of age,*" since they could not say, and to eternity of eternity. That law therefore should be understood, of which the apostle saith, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." For this will be kept by the saints, from whose mouth the word of truth is not taken, that is, by the church of Christ herself, not only during this world, that is, until this world is ended; but for another world which is styled *world without end.* For we shall not there receive the commandments of the law, as here, to keep them, but we shall keep the fulness of the law itself without any fear of sinning; for we shall love God the more fully when we shall have seen him; and our neighbour too; for "God will be all in all"; nor will there be room for any false suspicion concerning our neighbour, where no man will be hidden to any.—*Augustine.*

*Verse* 44.—"*Continually, for ever and ever.*" The language of this verse is very emphatic. Perfect obedience will constitute a large proportion of heavenly happiness to all eternity; and the nearer we approach to it on earth, the more we anticipate the felicity of heaven.—*Note in Bagster's Comprehensive Bible.*

*Verse* 45.—"*I will walk at liberty.* Wherever God pardons sin, he subdues it (Micah vii. 19). Then is the condemning power of sin taken away, when the commanding power of it is taken away. If a malefactor be in prison, how shall he know that his prince hath pardoned him? If a jailer come and knock off his chains and fetters, and lets him out of prison, then he may know he is pardoned: so, how shall we know God hath pardoned us? If the fetters of sin be broken off, and we walk at liberty in the ways of God, this is a blessed sign we are pardoned.—*Thomas Watson.*

*Verse* 45.—"*I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.*" As he who departs from confessing of God's truth doth cast himself in straits, in danger and bonds; so he that beareth out the confession of the truth doth walk as a free man; the truth doth set him free.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 45.—"*I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.*" When the Bible says that a man led by the Spirit is not under the law, it does not mean that he is free because he may sin without being punished for it; but it means that he is free because being taught by God's Spirit to love what his law commands he is no longer conscious of acting from restraint. The law does not drive him, because the Spirit leads him. . . . There is a state, brethren, when we recognize God, but do not love God in Christ. It is that state when we admire what is excellent, but are not able to perform it. It is a state when the love of good comes to nothing, dying away in a mere desire. That is a state of nature, when we are under the law, and not converted to the love of Christ. And then there is another state, when God writes his law upon our hearts by love instead of fear. The one state is this, "I cannot do the things that I would;" the other state is this, "I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy commandments."—*Frederick William Robertson,* 1816—1853.

*Verse* 45.—"*I will walk at liberty.*" The Psalmist's mind takes in the enlargement of his position. A little while ago, and he felt like a man straitened—hemmed in by rocks, in a narrow dangerous pass—who could not make his way out. You know the characteristics of Canaan, and you can easily conceive of the position of a traveller exploring his dreaded way through one of the mountain passes. The traveller before us has attained to tread upon secure ground. Now, all at once, favoured of the Most High, and conscious of being in his way, he finds himself in a spacious place, and

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he walks at large: "*And I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts.*" He had made diligent enquiry into all that the Lord had enjoined, and seeking conformity thereto, he felt that he could walk with comfort. He recreates himself in his spiritual emancipation. The secret evil-doer of fair profession cannot know this spiritual liberty at all. As long as a man finds himself to be wrong, and especially a man of a tender conscience, he feels hampered on all sides, depressed in mind, and evilly circumstanced. To what expansion of mind does a man awake when he becomes conscious of being in the appointed way of God! And he is actually at liberty; for the good providence of God is around him, and his grace supports him.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 45.—He who goes the beaten and right path will have no brambles hit him across the eyes.—*Saxon proverb.*

*Verses* 45–48.—Five things David promiseth himself here in the strength of God's grace. 1. That he should be free and easy in his duty: "*I will walk at liberty:*" freed from that which is evil, not hampered with the fetters of my own corruptions, and free to that which is good. 2. That he should be bold and courageous in his duty: "*I will speak of thy testimonies before kings.*" 3. That he should be cheerful and pleasant in his duty: "*I will delight myself in thy commandments,*" in conversing with them, in conforming to them. 4. That he should be diligent and vigorous in his duty: "*I will lift up my hands unto thy commandments;*" which notes not only a vehement desire towards them, but a close application of mind to the observance of them. 5. That he should be thoughtful and considerate in his duty: "*I will meditate in thy statutes.*"—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verses* 45–48.—In these four verses he explains, *seriatim*, in what the observance of the law consists; a thing he promised, when he said in the fourth verse of this division, that he would observe God's law in his heart, in his words, in his mind, and in his acts; and the prophet seems all at once, as having been heard, to have changed his mode of speaking, for he says, "*And I walked at large.*" When God's mercy visited me, I did not walk in the narrow ways of fear, but in the wide one of love; that is to say, I observed the law willingly, joyfully, with all the affections of my heart, "*because I have sought after thy commandments*" as a thing of great value, and most important to come at; "*and I spoke*" openly and fearlessly on the justice of his most holy law, even "*before kings, and I was not ashamed*"; and I constantly turned the law in my mind, and made its mysteries the subject of my meditation, "*and I lifted up my hands,*" to carry out his high and sublime commands; that is, his extremely perfect and arduous commands. Finally, in all manner of ways, in heart, mind, word, and deed, "*I was exercised in thy justifications.*"—*Robert Bellarmine.*

*Verse* 46.—"*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.*" In these words he seems to believe that he is in possession of that which he formerly prayed for. He had said, "Take not the word of truth out of my mouth," and now, as if he had obtained what he requested, he rises up, and maintains that he would not be dumb, even were he called upon to speak in the presence of kings. He affirms that he would, willingly stand forward in vindication of the glory of God in the face of the whole world.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 46.—"*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.*" The terror of kings and of men in power is an ordinary hindrance of free confession of God's truth in time of persecution; but faith in the truth sustained in the heart by God is able to bring forth a confession at all hazards.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 46.—"*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.*" Before David came to the crown kings were sometimes his *judges*, as Saul and Achish; but if he were called before them to give a reason of the hope that was in him, he would speak of God's testimonies, and profess to build his hope upon

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them, and make them his council, his guard, his crown, his all. We must never be afraid to own our religion, though it should expose us to the wrath of kings, but speak of it as that which we will live and die by, like the three children before Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iii. 16, Acts iv. 20. After David came to the crown kings were sometimes his *companions*, they visited him, and he returned their visits; but he did not, in complaisance to them, talk of everything but religion for fear of affronting them, and making his converse uneasy to them: no, God's testimonies shall be the principal subject of his discourse with the kings, not only to show that he was not ashamed of his religion, but to instruct them in it, and bring them over to it. It is good for kings to hear of *God's testimonies*, and it will adorn the conversation of princes themselves to speak of them.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 46.—"*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.*" Men of greatest holiness have been men of greatest boldness; witness Nehemiah, the three children, Daniel, and all the holy prophets and apostles: Prov. xxviii. 1, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion," yea, as a young lion, as the Hebrew has it, one that is in his hot blood and fears no colours, and that is more bold than any others. Holiness made Daniel not only as bold as a lion, but also to daunt the lions with his boldness. Luther was a man of great holiness, and a man of great boldness: witness his standing out against all the world; and when the emperor sent for him to Worms, and his friends dissuaded him from going, as sometimes Paul's did him, "Go," said he, "I will surely go, since I am sent for, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; yea, though I knew that there were as many devils in Worms to resist me as there be tiles to cover the houses, yet I would go." And when the same author and his associates were threatened with many dangers from opposers on all hands, he lets fall this heroic and magnanimous speech: "Come, let us sing the 46th Psalm, and then let them do their worst." Latimer was a man of much holiness, counting the darkness and profaneness of those times wherein he lived, and a man of much courage and boldness; witness his presenting to King Henry the Eighth, for a New Year's gift, a New Testament, wrapped up in a napkin, with this posie or motto about it, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."—*Thomas Brooks.*

*Verse* 46.—Note that in this verse we are taught to shun four vices. First, overmuch silence: hence he says, "*I will speak.*" Secondly, useless talkativeness: "*of thy testimonies.*" The Hebrew doctors say that ten measures of speaking had descended to the earth,—that nine had been carried off by the women, but one left for all the rest of the world. Hieronymus rightly exhorts all Christians: "Consecrate thy mouth to the Gospel: be unwilling to open it with trifles or fables." Thirdly, we are taught to shun cowardice: "*before kings.*" For, as it is said (Prov. xxix. 25), "*The fear of man bringeth a snare.*" Fourthly, and lastly, we are taught to shun cowardly bashfulness: "*and will not be ashamed.*"—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse* 46.—"*I will not be ashamed.*" That is, I shall not be cast down from my position or my hope; I shall not be afraid; nor will I, from fear of danger or reproach, shun or renounce the confession; nor shall I be overcome by terrors or threats.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

*Verses* 46, 47, 48.—In these three last verses David promiseth a threefold duty of thankfulness. First, the service of his tongue. Next, the service of his affections. Thirdly, the service of his actions. A good conscience renders always great consolation; and an honest life makes great boldness to speak without fear or shame, as ye see in David towards Saul, in Elias to Ahab, in Paul to Agrippa, to Festus, and to Felix.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 47.—"*I will delight myself in thy commandments.*" It is but poor comfort to the believer to be able to talk well to others upon the ways of God, and even to "bear the reproach" of his people, when his own heart is

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cold, insensible, and dull. He longs for "*delight*" in these ways; and he shall delight in them.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 47.—He who would preach boldly to others must himself "*delight*" in the practice of what he preacheth. If there be in us a new nature, it will "*love the commandments of God*" as being congenial to it; on that which we love we shall continually be "*meditating*," and our meditation will end in action; we shall "lift up the hands which hang down" (Heb. xii. 12), that they may "work the works of God whilst it is day, because the night cometh when no man can work" (John ix. 4).—*George Horne.*

*Verse* 47.—"*Thy commandments, which I have loved.*" On the word "*loved*," the Carmelite quotes two sayings of ancient philosophers, which he commends to the acceptance of those who have learnt the truer philosophy of the Gospel. The first is Aristotle's answer to the question of what profit he had derived from philosophy: "I have learnt to do without constraint that which others do from fear of the law." The second is a very similar saying of Aristippus: "If the laws were lost, all of us would live as we do now that they are in force." And for us the whole verse is summed up in the words of a greater Teacher than they: "If a man love me, he will keep my words": John xiv, 23.—*Neale and Littledale.*

*Verses* 47, 48.—What is in the word a law of precept, is in the heart a law of love; what is in the one a law of command, is in the other a law of liberty. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," Gal. v. 14. The law of love in the heart, is the fulfilling the law of God in the Spirit. It may well be said to be written in the heart, when a man doth love it. As we say, a beloved thing is in our hearts, not physically, but morally, as Calais was said to be in Queen Mary's heart. They might have looked long enough before they could have found there the map of the town; but grief for the loss of it killed her. It is a love that is inexpressible. David delights to mention it in two verses together: "*I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved,*" and often in the psalm resumes the assertion. Before the new creation, there was no affection to the law: it was not only a dead letter, but a devilish letter in the esteem of a man: he wished it razed out of the world, and another more pleasing to the flesh enacted. He would be a law unto himself; but when this is written within him, he is so pleased with the inscription, that he would not for all the world be without that law, and the love of it; whereas what obedience he paid to it before was out of fear, now out of affection; not only because of the authority of the lawgiver, but of the purity of the law itself. He would maintain it with all his might against the power of sin within, and the powers of darkness without him. He loves to view this law; regards every lineament of it, and dwells upon every feature with delightful ravishments. If his eye be off, or his foot go away, how doth he dissolve in tears, mourn and groan, till his former affection hath recovered breath, and stands upon its feet!—*Stephen Charnock.*

*Verse* 48.—"*My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments,*" etc. The duty that David promiseth God here, is the service of his actions, that he will lift up his hands to the practice of God's commandments. The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power; we are the disciples of that Master, who first began to do and then to teach. But now the world is full of mutilated Christians; either they want an ear and cannot hear God's word, or a tongue and cannot speak of it; or if they have both, they want hands and cannot practise it.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 48.—"*My hands also will I lift up.*" *To lift up the hands* is taken variously, and it signifies:—1. *To pray:* as in Psalm xxviii. 2; Lam. ii. 19; Hab. iii. 10.—2. *To bless* others: as Levit. ix. 22; Ps. cxxxiv. 2.—3. *To swear:* as Gen. xiv. 22; Exod. vi. 8.—4. *To set about some important matter:* as

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Gen. xli. 44; "without thee shall no man lift up his hand;" *i.e.* shall attempt anything, or shall accomplish; Psalm x. 12, "lift up thine hand," viz., effectively, to bring help: Heb. xii. 12, "lift up the hands," etc.; *i.e.* strongly stimulate Christians. Perhaps all these may be accommodated to the present passage; for it is possible to be either, 1. Prayer for Divine grace for the doing of the precepts: or, 2. Blessing, *i.e.* praise of God because of them, and the advantages which have thence accrued to us: which the Syriac translator approves, who adds, "and I will glory in thy faithfulness:"—or, 3. Vow, or oath of constant obedience, etc.:—or, 4. Active and earnest undertaking of them; which, also, appears to be here chiefly meant.—*Henry Hammond in Synopsis Poli.*

*Verse* 48.—"*My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments;*" vowing obedience to them: Genesis xiv. 22.—*William Kay.*

*Verse* 48.—"*My hands also will I lift up.*" I will present every victim and sacrifice which the law requires. I will make prayer and supplication before thee, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 48.—"*My hands also will I lift up.*" Aben Ezra explains, (and perhaps rightly,) that the metaphor, in this place, is taken from the action of those who receive any one whom they are glad or proud to see.—*Daniel Cresswell*, 1776—1844.

*Verse* 48.—"I will lift up my hands *in admiration of* thy precepts, And meditate on thy statutes."—*W. Green, in "A New Translation of the Psalms,"* 1762.

*Verse* 48.—To lift up the hand is a gesture importing readiness, and special intention in doing a thing. "*My hands* (saith David) *also will I lift up unto thy commandments*"; as a man that is willing to do a thing and addresseth himself to the doing of it, lifts up his hand; so a godly man is described as lifting up his hand to fulfil the commands of God.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse* 48.—"*Thy commandments.*" By *commandments* he understandeth the word of God, yet it is more powerful than so; it is not, I have loved thy *word;* but, I have loved that part of thy word that is thy "*commandments,*" the *mandatory* part. There are some parts of the will and word of God that even ungodly men will be content to love. There is the *promissory* part; all men gather and catch at the promises, and show love to these. The reason is clear; there is pleasure, and profit, and gain, and advantage in the promises; but a pious soul doth not only look to the promises, but to the *commands.* Piety looks on Christ as a *Lawgiver*, as well as a *Saviour*, and not only on him as a *Mediator*, but as a *Lord* and *Master;* it doth not only live by *faith*, but it liveth by *rule;* it makes indeed the *promises* the stay and *staff* of a Christian's life, but it makes the commandments of God the *level.* A pious heart knows that some command is implied in the qualification and condition of every promise; it knows that as for the fulfilling of the promises, it belongs to God; but the fulfilling of the commands belongs to us. Therefore it looks so, upon the enjoying of that which is promised that it will first do that which is commanded. There is no hope of attaining comfort in the promise but in keeping of the precept; therefore he pitcheth the emphasis, "I have loved thy *word,*" that is true, and *all* thy word, and this part, the *mandatory* part: "I have loved thy *commandments.*"

Observe the number, "thy commandments"; it is plural, that is, *all* thy commandments without exception; otherwise even ungodly men will be content to love *some* commandments, if they may choose them for themselves.—*Richard Hollsworth* (1590—1649), *in "The Valley of Vision."*

*Verse* 48.—"*Which I love,*" or "*have loved,*" as in verse 47, the terms of which are studiously repeated with a fine rhetorical effect, which is further heightened by the *and* at the beginning, throwing both verses, as it were, into one sentence. As if he had said: I will derive my happiness from thy commandments, which I love and have loved, and to these commandments,

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which I love and have loved, I will lift up my hands and heart together.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verse* 48.—"*I will meditate.*" It is in holy meditation on the word of God that all the graces of the Spirit are manifested. What is the principle of faith but the reliance of the soul upon the promises of the word? What is the sensation of godly fear but the soul trembling before the threatenings of God? What is the object of hope but the apprehended glory of God? What is the excitement of desire or love but longing, endearing contemplations of the Saviour, and of his unspeakable blessings? So that we can scarcely conceive of the influences of grace separated from spiritual meditation in the word.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 48.—The Syriac has an addition to verse 48, which I am surprised has not been noticed. The addition is, "*and I will glory in thy faithfulness.*" Dathe in a note says, THE SEVENTY seem to have read some such addition, although not exactly the same.—*Edward Thomas Gibson*, 1819—1880.

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 49 TO 56.

REMEMBER the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

50 This *is* my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

51 The proud have had me greatly in derision: *yet* have I not declined from thy law.

52 I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself.

53 Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

54 Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

55 I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law.

56 This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

This octrain deals with the comfort of the word. It begins by seeking the main consolation, namely, the Lord's fulfilment of his promise, and then it shows how the word sustains us under affliction, and makes us so impervious to ridicule that we are moved by the harsh conduct of the wicked rather to horror of their sin than to any submission to their temptations. We are then shown how the Scripture furnishes songs for pilgrims, and memories for night-watchers; and the psalm concludes by the general statement that the whole of this happiness and comfort arises out of keeping the statutes of the Lord.

49. "*Remember the word unto thy servant.*" He asks for no new promise, but to have the old word fulfilled. He is grateful that he has received so good a word, he embraces it with all his heart, and now entreats the Lord to deal with him according to it. He does not say, "remember my service to thee," but "thy word to me." The words of masters to servants are not always such that servants wish their lords to remember them; for they usually observe the faults and failings of the work done, inasmuch as it does not tally with the word of command. But we who serve the best of masters are not anxious to have one of his words fall to the ground, since the Lord will so kindly remember his word of command as to give us grace wherewith we may obey, and he will couple with it a remembrance of his word of promise, so that our hearts shall be comforted. If God's word to us as his servants is so precious, what shall we say of his word to us as his sons?

The Psalmist does not fear a failure in the Lord's memory, but he makes use of the promise as a plea, and this is the form in which he speaks, after the manner of men when they plead with one another. When the Lord remembers the sins of his servant, and brings them before his conscience, the penitent cries, Lord, remember thy word of pardon, and therefore remember my sins and iniquities no more. There is a world of meaning in that word "*remember*," as it is addressed to God; it is used in Scripture in the tenderest sense, and suits the sorrowing and the depressed. The Psalmist cried, "Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions": Job also prayed that the Lord would appoint him a set time, and remember him. In the present instance the prayer is as personal as the "Remember me" of the thief, for its essence lies in the words—"unto thy servant." It would be all in vain for us if the promise were remembered to all others if it did not come true to ourselves; but there is no fear, for the Lord has never forgotten a single promise to a single believer.



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"*Upon which thou hast caused me to hope.*" The argument is that God, having given grace to hope in the promise, would surely never disappoint that hope. He cannot have caused us to hope without cause. If we hope upon his word we have a sure basis: our gracious Lord would never mock us by exciting false hopes. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, hence the petition for immediate remembrance of the cheering word. Moreover, it is the hope of a servant, and it is not possible that a great and good master would disappoint his dependent; if such a master's word were not kept it could only be through an oversight, hence the anxious cry, "Remember." Our great Master will not forget his own servants, nor disappoint the expectation which he himself has raised: because we are the Lord's, and endeavour to remember his word by obeying it, we may be sure that he will think upon his own servants, and remember his own promise by making it good.

This verse is the prayer of love fearing to be forgotten, of humility conscious of insignificance and anxious not to be overlooked, of penitence trembling lest the evil of its sin should overshadow the promise, of eager desire longing for the blessing, and of holy confidence which feels that all that is wanted is comprehended in the word. Let but the Lord remember his promise, and the promised act is as good as done.

50. "*This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.*" He means,—Thy word is my comfort, or the fact that thy word has brought quickening to me is my comfort. Or he means that the hope which God had given him was his comfort, for God had quickened him thereby. Whatever may be the exact sense, it is clear that the Psalmist had affliction,—affliction peculiar to himself, which he calls "*my* affliction"; that he had comfort in it,—comfort specially his own, for he styles it "*my* comfort"; and that he knew what the comfort was, and where it came from, for he exclaims—"*this* is my comfort." The worldling clutches his money-bag, and says, "this is my comfort"; the spendthrift points to his gaiety, and shouts, "this is my comfort"; the drunkard lifts his glass, and sings, "this is my comfort"; but the man whose hope comes from God feels the life-giving power of the word of the Lord, and he testifies, "this is my comfort." Paul said, "I know whom I have believed." Comfort is desirable at all times; but comfort in affliction is like a lamp in a dark place. Some are unable to find comfort at such times; but it is not so with believers, for their Saviour has said to them, "I will not leave you comfortless." Some have comfort and no affliction, others have affliction and no comfort; but the saints have comfort in their affliction.

The word frequently comforts us by increasing the force of our inner life: "this is my comfort; thy word hath quickened me." To quicken the heart is to cheer the whole man. Often the near way to consolation is sanctification and invigoration. If we cannot clear away the fog, it may be better to rise to a higher level, and so to get above it. Troubles which weigh us down while we are half dead become mere trifles when we are full of life. Thus have we often been raised in spirit by quickening grace, and the same thing will happen again, for the Comforter is still with us, the Consolation of Israel ever liveth, and the very God of peace is evermore our Father. On looking back upon our past life there is one ground of comfort as to our state—the word of God has made us alive, and kept us so. We were dead, but we are dead no longer. From this we gladly infer that if the Lord had meant to destroy he would not have quickened us. If we were only hypocrites worthy of derision, as the proud ones say, he would not have revived us by his grace. An experience of quickening is a fountain of good cheer.

See how this verse is turned into a prayer in verse 107. "Quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word." Experience teaches us how to pray, and furnishes arguments in prayer.

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51. "*The proud have had me greatly in derision.*" Proud men never love gracious men, and as they fear them they veil their fear under a pretended contempt. In this case their hatred revealed itself in ridicule, and that ridicule was loud and long. When they wanted sport they made sport of David because he was God's servant. Men must have strange eyes to be able to see a farce in faith, and a comedy in holiness; yet it is sadly the case that men who are short of wit can generally provoke a broad grin by jesting at a saint. Conceited sinners make footballs of godly men. They call it roaring fun to caricature a faithful member of "The Holy Club"; his methods of careful living are the material for their jokes about "the Methodist"; and his hatred of sin sets their tongues a-wagging at long-faced Puritanism, and strait-laced hypocrisy. If David was greatly derided, we may not expect to escape the scorn of the ungodly. There are hosts of proud men still upon the face of the earth, and if they find a believer in affliction they will be mean enough and cruel enough to make jests at his expense. It is the nature of the son of the bondwoman to mock the child of the promise.

"*Yet have I not declined from thy law.*" Thus the deriders missed their aim: they laughed, but they did not win. The godly man, so far from turning aside from the right way, did not even slacken his pace, or in any sense fall off from his holy habits. Many would have declined, many have declined, but David did not do so. It is paying too much honour to fools to yield half a point to them. Their unhallowed mirth will not harm us if we pay no attention to it, even as the moon suffers nothing from the dogs that bay at her. God's law is our highway of peace and safety, and those who would laugh us out of it wish us no good.

From verse 61 we note that David was not overcome by the spoiling of his goods any more than by these cruel mockings. See also verse 157, where the multitude of persecutors and enemies were baffled in their attempts to make him decline from God's ways.

52. "*I remembered thy judgments of old, O* LORD; *and have comforted myself.*" He had asked the Lord to remember, and here he remembers God and his judgments. When we see no present display of the divine power it is wise to fall back upon the records of former ages, since they are just as available as if the transactions were of yesterday, seeing the Lord is always the same. Our true comfort must be found in what our God works on behalf of truth and right, and as the histories of the olden times are full of divine interpositions it is well to be thoroughly acquainted with them. Moreover, if we are advanced in years we have the providences of our early days to review, and these should by no means be forgotten or left out of our thoughts. The argument is good and solid: he who has shown himself strong on behalf of his believing people is the immutable God, and therefore we may expect deliverance at his hands. The grinning of the proud will not trouble us when we remember how the Lord dealt with their predecessors in bygone periods; he destroyed them at the deluge, he confounded them at Babel, he drowned them at the Red Sea, he drove them out of Canaan: he has in all ages bared his arm against the haughty, and broken them as potters' vessels. While in our own hearts we humbly drink of the mercy of God in quietude, we are not without comfort in seasons of turmoil and derision; for then we resort to God's justice, and remember how he scoffs at the scoffers: "He that sitteth in the heavens doth laugh, the Lord doth have them in derision."

When he was greatly derided the Psalmist did not sit down in despair, but rallied his spirits. He knew that comfort is needful for strength in service, and for the endurance of persecution, and therefore he comforted himself. In doing this he resorted not so much to the sweet as to the stern side of the Lord's dealings, and dwelt upon his judgments. If we can find sweetness in the divine justice, how much more shall we perceive it in divine

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love and grace. How thoroughly must that man be at peace with God who can find comfort, not only in his promises, but in his judgments. Even the terrible things of God are cheering to believers. They know that nothing is more to the advantage of all God's creatures than to be ruled by a strong hand which will deal out justice. The righteous man has no fear of the ruler's sword, which is only a terror to evil doers. When the godly man is unjustly treated he finds comfort in the fact that there is a Judge of all the earth who will avenge his own elect, and redress the ills of these disordered times.

53. "*Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.*" He was horrified at their action, at the pride which led them to it, and at the punishment which would be sure to fall upon them for it. When he thought upon the ancient judgments of God he was filled with terror at the fate of the godless; as well he might be. Their laughter had not distressed him, but he was distressed by a foresight of their overthrow. Truths which were amusement to them caused amazement to him. He saw them utterly turning away from the law of God, and leaving it as a path forsaken and overgrown from want of traffic, and this forsaking of the law filled him with the most painful emotions: he was astonished at their wickedness, stunned by their presumption, alarmed by the expectation of their sudden overthrow, amazed by the terror of their certain doom.

See verses 106 and 158, and note the tenderness which combined with all this. Those who are the firmest believers in the eternal punishment of the wicked are the most grieved at their doom. It is no proof of tenderness to shut one's eyes to the awful doom of the ungodly. Compassion is far better shown in trying to save sinners than in trying to make things pleasant all round. Oh that we were all more distressed as we think of the portion of the ungodly in the lake of fire! The popular plan is to shut your eyes and forget all about it, or pretend to doubt it; but this is not the way of the faithful servant of God.

54. "*Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.*" Like others of God's servants, David knew that he was not at home in this world, but a pilgrim through it, seeking a better country. He did not, however, sigh over this fact, but he sang about it. He tells us nothing about his pilgrim sighs, but speaks of his pilgrim songs. Even the palace in which he dwelt was but "*the house of his pilgrimage,*" the inn at which he rested, the station at which he halted for a little while. Men are wont to sing when they come to their inn, and so did this godly sojourner; he sang the songs of Zion, the statutes of the great King. The commands of God were as well known to him as the ballads of his country, and they were pleasant to his taste and musical to his ear. Happy is the heart which finds its joy in the commands of God, and makes obedience its recreation. When religion is set to music it goes well. When we sing in the ways of the Lord it shows that our hearts are in them. Ours are pilgrim psalms, songs of degrees; but they are such as we may sing throughout eternity; for the statutes of the Lord are the psalmody of heaven itself.

Saints find horror in sin, and harmony in holiness. The wicked shun the law, and the righteous sing of it. In past days we have sung the Lord's statutes, and in this fact we may find comfort in present affliction. Since our songs are so very different from those of the proud, we may expect to join a very different choir at the last, and sing in a place far removed from their abode.

Note how in the sixth verses of their respective octaves we often find resolves to bless God, or records of testimony. In verse 46 it is, "I will speak," and in 62, "I will give thanks," while here he speaks of songs.

55. "*I have remembered thy name, O* LORD, *in the night.*" When others slept I woke to think of thee, thy person, thy actions, thy covenant, thy *name*, under which last term he comprehends the divine character as far as it is

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revealed. He was so earnest after the living God that he woke up at dead of night to think upon him. These were David's Night Thoughts. If they were not Sunny Memories they were memories of the Sun of Righteousness. It is well when our memory furnishes us with consolation, so that we can say with the Psalmist,—Having early been taught to know thee, I had only to remember the lessons of thy grace, and my heart was comforted. This verse shows not only that the man of God had remembered, but that he still remembered the Lord his God. We are to hallow the name of God, and we cannot do so if it slips from our memory.

"*And have kept thy law.*" He found sanctification through meditation; by the thoughts of the night he ruled the actions of the day. As the actions of the day often create the dreams of the night, so do the thoughts of the night produce the deeds of the day. If we do not keep the name of God in our memory we shall not keep the law of God in our conduct. Forgetfulness of mind leads up to forgetfulness of life.

When we hear the night songs of revellers we have in them sure evidence that they do not keep God's law; but the quiet musings of gracious men are proof positive that the name of the Lord is dear to them. We may judge of nations by their songs, and so we may of men; and in the case of the righteous, their singing and their thinking are both indications of their love to God: whether they lift up their voices, or sit in silence, they are still the Lord's. Blessed are the men whose "night-thoughts" are memories of the eternal light; they shall be remembered of their Lord when the night of death comes on. Reader, are your thoughts in the dark full of light, because full of God? Is his name the natural subject of your evening reflections? Then it will give a tone to your morning and noonday hours. Or do you give your whole mind to the fleeting cares and pleasures of this world? If so, it is little wonder that you do not live as you ought to do. No man is holy by chance. If we have no memory for the name of Jehovah we are not likely to remember his commandments: if we do not think of him secretly we shall not obey him openly.

56. "*This I had, because I kept thy precepts.*" He had this comfort, this remembrance of God, this power to sing, this courage to face the enemy, this hope in the promise, because he had earnestly observed the commands of God, and striven to walk in them. We are not rewarded for our works, but there is a reward *in* them. Many a comfort is obtainable only by careful living: we can surely say of such consolations, "This I had because I kept thy precepts." How can we defy ridicule if we are living inconsistently? how can we comfortably remember the name of the Lord if we live carelessly? It may be that David means that he had been enabled to keep the law because he had attended to the separate precepts: he had taken the commands in detail, and so had reached to holiness of life. Or, by keeping certain of the precepts he had gained spiritual strength to keep others: for God gives more grace to those who have some measure of it, and those who improve their talents shall find themselves improving. It may be best to leave the passage open just as our version does; so that we may say of a thousand priceless blessings, "these came to us in the way of obedience." All our possessions are the gifts of grace, and yet some of them come in the shape of reward; yet even then the reward is not of debt, but of grace. God first works in us good works, and then rewards us for them.

Here we have an apt conclusion to this section of the psalm, for this verse is a strong argument for the prayer with which the section commenced. The sweet singer had evidence of having kept God's precepts, and therefore he could the more properly beg the Lord to keep his promises. All through the passage we may find pleas, especially in the two *remembers*. "I have remembered thy judgments," and "I have remembered thy name"; "Remember thy word unto thy servant."

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## NOTES ON VERSES 49 TO 56.

*Verse* 49.—"*Remember the word unto thy servant,*" etc. Those that make God's promises their portion, may with humble boldness make them their plea. God gave the promise in which the Psalmist hoped, and the hope by which he embraced the promise.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 49.—"*Remember the word unto thy servant,*" etc. When we hear any promise in the word of God, let us turn it into a prayer. God's promises are his bonds. Sue him on his bond. He loves that we should wrestle with him by his promises. Why, Lord, thou hast made this and that promise, thou canst not deny thyself, thou canst not deny thine own truth; thou canst not cease to be God, and thou canst as well cease to be God, as deny thy promise, that is thyself. "'*Lord, remember thy word.*' I put thee in mind of thy promise, '*whereon thou hast caused me to hope.*' If I be deceived, thou hast deceived me. Thou hast made these promises, and caused me to trust in thee, and 'thou never failest those that trust in thee, therefore keep thy word to me.'"—*Richard Sibbes.*

*Verse* 49.—"*Remember the word unto thy servant,*" etc. God promiseth salvation before he giveth it, to excite our desire of it, to exercise our faith, to prove our sincerity, to perfect our patience. For these purposes he seemeth sometimes to have forgotten his word, and to have deserted those whom he had engaged to succour and relieve; in which case he would have us, as it were, to remind him of his promise, and solicit his performance of it. The Psalmist here instructeth us to prefer our petition upon these grounds; first, that God cannot prove false to his own word: "*Remember thy word;*" secondly, that he will never disappoint an expectation which himself hath raised: "*upon which thou hast caused me to hope.*"—*George Horne.*

*Verses* 49, 52, 55.—"*Remember.*" "*I remembered.*" As David beseecheth the Lord to remember his promise, so he protests, in verse 52, that he remembered the judgments of God, and was comforted; and in verse 55, that he remembered the name of the Lord in the night. It is but a mockery of God, to desire him to remember his promise made to us, when we make no conscience of the promise we have made to him. But alas, how often we fail in this duty, and by our own default, diminish that comfort we might have of God's promises in the day of our trouble.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 49.—"*Thy servant.*" Be sure of your qualification; for David pleadeth here, partly as a servant of God, and partly as a believer. First, "Remember the word unto thy servant;" and then, "upon which thou hast caused me to hope." There is a double qualification: with respect to the precept of subjection, and the promise of dependence. The precept is before the promise. They have right to the promises, and may justly lay hold upon them, who are God's servants; they who apply themselves to obey his precepts, these only can rightly apply his promises to themselves. None can lay claim to rewarding grace but those who are partakers of sanctifiying grace. Make it clear that you are God's servants, and then these promises which are generally offered are your own, no less than if your name were inserted in the promise, and written in the Bible.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 49.—"*Thou hast caused me to hope.*" Let us remember, first, that the promises made to us are of God's free mercy; that the grace to believe, which is the condition of the promise, is also of himself; for "faith is the gift of God"; thirdly, that the arguments by which he confirms our faith in the certainty of our salvation are drawn from himself, not from us.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 50.—"*This is my comfort,*" etc. The word of promise was David's comfort, because the word had quickened him to receive comfort. The

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original is capable of another modification of thought—"*This is my consolation that thy word hath quickened me.*" He had the happy experience within him; he felt the reviving, restoring, life-giving power of the word, as he read, as he dwelt upon it, as he meditated therein, and as he gave himself up to the way of the word. The believer has all God's unfailing promises to depend upon, and as he depends he gains strength by his own happy experiences of the faithfulness of the word.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 50.—"*My comfort.*" "*Thy word.*" God hath given us his Scriptures, his word; and the comforts that are fetched from thence are strong ones, because they are his comforts, since they come from his word. The word of a prince comforts, though he be not there to speak it. Though it be by a letter, or by a messenger, yet he whose word it is, is one that is able to make his word good. He is Lord and Master of his word. The word of God is comfortable, and all the reasons that are in it, and that are deduced from it, upon good ground and consequence, are comfortable, because it is God's word. Those comforts in God's word, and reasons from thence, are wonderful in variety. There is comfort from the liberty of a Christian, that he hath free access to the throne of grace; comfort from the prerogatives of a Christian, that he is the child of God, that he is justified, that he is the heir of heaven, and such like; comforts from the promises of grace, of the presence of God, of assistance by his presence.—*Richard Sibbes.*

*Verse* 50.—"*Comfort.*" *Nechamah*, consolation; whence the name of Nehemiah was derived. The word occurs only in Job vi. 9.

*Verse* 50.—"*Comfort.*" The Hebrew verb rendered *to comfort* signifies, first, to repent, and then to comfort. And certainly the sweetest joy is from the surest tears. Tears are the breeders of spiritual joy. When Hannah had wept, she went away, and was no more sad. The bee gathers the best honey from the bitterest herbs. Christ made the best wine of water. . .

Gospel comforts are, first, unutterable comforts, 1 Pet. i. 8; Philip. iv. 4. Secondly, they are real, John xiv. 27; all others are but seeming comforts, but painted comforts. Thirdly, they are holy comforts, Isa. lxiv. 5; Ps. cxxxviii. 5; they flow from a Holy Spirit, and nothing can come from the Holy Spirit but that which is holy. Fourthly, they are the greatest and strongest comforts, Eph. vi. 17. Few heads and hearts are able to bear them, as few heads are able to bear strong wines. Fifthly, they reach to the inward man, to the soul, 2 Thess. ii. 17, the noble part of man. "My soul rejoiceth in God my Saviour." Our other comforts only reach the face; they sink not so deep as the heart. Sixthly, they are the most soul-filling and soul-satisfying comforts, Ps. xvi. 11, Cant. ii. 3. Other comforts cannot reach the soul, and therefore they cannot fill nor satisfy the soul. Seventhly, they comfort in saddest distresses, in the darkest night, and in the most stormy day, Ps. xciv. 19, Hab. iii. 7, 8. Eighthly, they are everlasting, 2 Thess. ii. 16. The joy of the wicked is but as a glass, bright and brittle, and evermore in danger of breaking; but the joy of the saints is lasting.—*Thomas Brooks.*

*Verse* 50.—"*Thy word hath quickened me.*" It is a reviving comfort which quickeneth the soul. Many times we seem to be dead to all spiritual operations, our affections are damped and discouraged; but the word of God puts life into the dead, and relieveth us in our greatest distresses. Sorrow worketh death, but joy is the life of the soul. Now, when dead in all sense and feeling, "the just shall live by faith" (Hab. ii. 4), and the hope wrought in us by the Scriptures is "a lively hope" (1 Pet. i. 3). Other things skin the wound, but our sore breaketh out again, and runneth; faith penetrateth into the inwards of a man, doth good to the heart; and the soul reviveth by waiting upon God, and gets life and strength.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 50.—"*Thy word hath quickened me.*" Here, as is evident from the mention of "affliction"—and indeed throughout the psalm—the verb

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"*quicken*" is used not merely in an external sense of "preservation from death" (Hupfeld), but of "reviving the heart," "imparting fresh courage," etc.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

*Verse* 50.—"*Thy word hath quickened me.*" It made me alive when I was dead in sin; it has many a time made me lively when I was dead in duty; it has quickened me to that which is good, when I was backward and averse to it; and it has quickened me in that which is good, when I was cold and indifferent.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 50.—(*Second Clause*). Adore God's distinguishing grace, if you have felt the power and authority of the word upon your conscience; if you can say as David, "*Thy word hath quickened me.*" Christian, bless God that he has not only given thee his word to be a rule of holiness, but his grace to be a principle of holiness. Bless God that he has not only written his word, but sealed it upon thy heart, and made it effectual. Canst thou say it is of divine inspiration, because thou hast felt it to be of lively operation? Oh free grace! That God should send out his word, and heal thee; that he should heal thee and not others! That the same Scripture which to them is a dead letter, should be to thee a savour of life.—*Thomas Watson.*

*Verse* 51.—"*The proud have had me greatly in derision.*" The saints of God have complained of this in all ages: David of his busy mockers; the abjects jeered him. Job was disdained of those children whose fathers he would have scorned to set with the dogs of his flock, Job xxx. 1. Joseph was nicknamed a dreamer, Paul a babbler, Christ himself a Samaritan, and with intent of disgrace a carpenter. . . . . Michal was barren, yet she hath too many children, that scorn the habit and exercises of holiness. There cannot be a greater argument of a foul soul, than the deriding of religious services. Worldly hearts can see nothing in those actions, but folly and madness; piety hath no relish, but is distasteful to their palates.—*Thomas Adams.*

*Verse* 51.—"*The proud,*" etc. Scoffing proceedeth from pride. Prov. iii. 34, with 1 Peter v. 5.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 51.—"*Greatly.*" The word noteth "continually," the Septuagint translates it by *αφύδρα*, the vulgar Latin by *usque valde*, and *usque longe.* They derided him with all possible bitterness; and day by day they had their scoffs for him, so that it was both a grievous and a perpetual temptation.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 51.—"*Derision.*" David tells that he had been jeered for his religion, but yet he had not been jeered out of his religion. They laughed at him for his praying and called it cant, for his seriousness and called it mopishness, for his strictness and called it needless preciseness.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 51.—It is a great thing in a soldier to behave well under fire; but it is a greater thing for a soldier of the cross to be unflinching in the day of his trial. It does not hurt the Christian to have the dogs bark at him.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verses* 50, 51.—The life and vigour infused into me by the promise which "*quickened me,*" caused me "*not to decline from thy law,*" even though "*the proud did iniquitously altogether*"; doing all in their power, through their jeerings at me, to deter me from its observance.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

*Verse* 52.—"*I remember thy judgments of old.*" It is good to have a number of examples of God's dealings with his servants laid up in the store-house of a sanctified memory, that thereby faith may be strengthened in the day of affliction; for so are we here taught.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 52.—"*I remembered thy judgments.*" He remembered that at the beginning Adam, because of transgression of the divine command, was cast out from dwelling in Paradise; and that Cain, condemned by the authority of the divine sentence, paid the price of his parricidal crime; that Enoch,

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caught up to heaven because of his devotion, escaped the poison of earthly wickedness: that Noah, because of righteousness the victor of the deluge, became the survivor of the human race; that Abraham, because of faith, diffused the seed of his posterity through the whole earth; that Israel, because of the patient bearing of troubles, consecrated a believing people by the sign of his own name; that David himself, because of gentleness, having had regal honour conferred, was preferred to his elder brothers.—*Ambrose.*

*Verse* 52.—"*I remembered,*" etc. Jerome writes of that religious lady Paula, that she had got most of the Scriptures by heart. We are bid to have the "word dwell in" us: Col. iii. 16. The word is a jewel that adorns the hidden man; and shall we not remember it? "Can a maid forget her ornaments?" (Jer. ii. 32). Such as have a disease they call *lienteria*, in which the meat comes up as fast as they eat it, and stays not in the stomach, are not nourished by it. If the word stays not in the memory, it cannot profit. Some can better remember a piece of news than a line of Scripture: their memories are like those ponds, where frogs live, but fish die.—*Thomas Watson, in "The Morning Exercises."*

*Verse* 52.—"*I remembered thy judgments, and have comforted myself.*" A case of conscience may be propounded: how could David be comforted by God's judgments, for it seemeth a barbarous thing to delight in the destruction of any? it is said, "He that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished" (Prov. xvii. 5).

1. It must be remembered that judgment implies both parts of God's righteous dispensation, the deliverance of the godly, and the punishment of the wicked. Now, in the first sense there is no ground of scruple, for it is said, "Judgment shall return unto righteousness" (Ps. xciv. 15); the sufferings of good men shall be turned into the greatest advantages, as the context showeth that God will not cast off his people, but judgment shall return unto righteousness. 2. Judgment, as it signifieth punishment of the wicked, may yet be a comfort, not as it importeth the calamity of any, but either,—

(1.) When the wicked is punished, the snare and allurement to sin is taken away, which is the hope of impunity; for by their punishment men see that it is dangerous to sin against God: "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isai. xxvi. 9); the snare is removed from many a soul.

(2.) Their derision and mockage of godliness ceaseth, they do no longer vex and pierce the souls of the godly, saying, "Aha, aha" (Ps. xl. 15); it is as a wound to their heart when they say, "Where is thy God?" (Ps. xlii. 10). Judgment slayeth this evil.

(3.) The impediments and hindrances of worshipping and serving God are taken away: when the nettles are rooted up, the corn hath the more room to grow.

(4.) Opportunity of molesting God's servants is taken away, and they are prevented from afflicting the church by their oppressions; and so way is made for the enlarging of Christ's kingdom.

(5.) Thereby also God's justice is manifested: When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting" (Prov. xi. 10); "The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him: lo, this is the man that made not God his strength" (Ps. lii. 6, 7); rejoice over Babylon, "ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her" (Rev. xviii. 20). When the word of God is fulfilled, surely then we may rejoice that his justice and truth are cleared.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 52.—The word *mishphatim*, "*judgments,*" is used in Scripture either for laws enacted, or judgments executed according to those laws. The one may be called the judgments of his mouth, as, "Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth"

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(Ps. cv. 5), the other, the judgments of his hand. As both will bear the name of judgments, so both may be said to be "*of old.*" His decrees and statutes which have an eternal equity in them, and were graven upon the heart of man in innocency, may well be said to be of old: and because from the beginning of the world God hath been punishing the wicked, and delivering the godly in due time, his judiciary dispensations may be said to be so also. The matter is not much, whether we interpret it of either his statutes or decrees, for they both contain matter of comfort, and we may see the ruin of the wicked in the word, if we see it not in providence. Yet I rather interpret it of those righteous acts recorded in Scripture, which God as a just judge hath executed in all ages, according to the promises and threatenings annexed to his laws. Only in that sense I must note to you, judgments imply his mercies in the deliverance of his righteous servants, as well as his punishments on the wicked: the seasonable interpositions of his relief for the one in their greatest distresses, as well as his just vengeance on the other notwithstanding their highest prosperities.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verses* 52, 55.—"*I remembered thy judgments,*" "*thy name in the night.*" Thomas Fuller thus writes in his "David's Heartie Repentance":—

> "For sundry duties he did dayes devide,
> Making exchange of worke his recreation;
> For prayer he set the precious morne aside,
> The mid-day he bequeathed to meditation:
> Sweete sacred stories he reserved for night,
> To reade of Moses' meeknes, Sampson's might:
> These were his joy, these onely his delight."

*Verse* 53.—"*Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked.*" I have had clear views of *eternity;* have seen the blessedness of the *godly*, in some measure; and have longed to share their happy state; as well as been comfortably satisfied that through grace I shall do so; but, oh, what anguish is raised in my mind, to think of an *eternity* for those who are *Christless*, for those who are mistaken, and who bring their false hopes to the grave with them! The sight was so dreadful I could by no means bear it: my thoughts recoiled, and I said, (under a more affecting sense than ever before,) "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?"—*David Brainerd*, 1718—1747.

*Verse* 53.—"*Horror hath taken hold upon me,*" etc. Oh who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable; for who knows the power of God's anger?

How dreadful is the state of those that are daily and hourly in danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be. Oh that you would consider it, whether you be young or old! There is reason to think, that there are many in this congregation now hearing this discourse, that will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, or in what seats they sit, or what thoughts they now have. It may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one person, and but one, in the whole congregation, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing would it be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might all the rest of the congregation lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But, alas! instead of one, how many is it likely will remember this discourse in hell!—*Jonathan Edwards, in a Sermon entitled, "Sinners in the Hands of an angry God."*

*Verse* 53.—"*Horror.*" זלעפה, *zilâphah*, properly signifies the pestilential

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burning wind called by the Arabs simoon (see Ps. xi. 6); and is here used in a figurative sense for the *most horrid mental distress;* and strongly marks the idea the Psalmist had of the corrupting, pestilential, and destructive nature of sin.—*Note in Bagster's Comprehensive Bible.*

*Verse* 53.—"*Horror.*" The word for "*horror*" signifieth also a tempest or storm. Translations vary; some read it, as Junius, "a storm overtaking one"; Ainsworth, "a burning horror hath seized me," and expoundeth it a storm of terror and dismay. The Septuagint, *ἀθυμία κατέχε μὲ*, "faintness and dejection of mind hath possessed me"; our own translation, "I am horribly afraid"; all translations, as well as the original word, imply a great trouble of mind, and a vehement commotion; like a storm, it was matter of disquiet and trembling to David.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 53.—"*Because of the wicked that forsake thy law.*" David grieved, not because he was himself attacked; but because the law of God was forsaken; and he bewailed the condemnation of those who so did, because they are lost to God. Just as a good father in the madness of his son, when he is ill-used by him, mourns not his own but the misery of the diseased; and he grieves at the contumely, not because it is cast on himself, but because the diseased person knows not what he does in his madness: so a good man, when he sees a sinner neither reverence nor honour the grey hairs of a parent, that to his face he can insult him, that he does not know in the madness of sinning what unbecoming and shameful things he does, grieves for him as one on the point of death, laments him as one despaired of by the physicians. As a good physician in the first place advises, then, even if he receive hard words, though he be beaten, nevertheless as the man is ill he bears with him; and if he be cursed he does not leave; and any medicine that may be applied he does not refuse; nor does he go away as from a stubborn fellow, but strives with all diligence to heal him as one that has deserved well from him, exercising not only the skill of science but also benignity of disposition. Even so, a righteous man, when he is treated with contempt, does not turn away, but when he is calumniated he regards it as madness, not as depravity; and desires rather to apply his own remedy to the wound, and sympathises, and grieves not for himself, but for him who labours under an incurable disease.—*Ambrose.*

*Verse* 53.—"*The wicked that forsake thy law*"; not only transgress the law of the Lord, as every man does, more or less; but wilfully and obstinately despise it, and cast it behind their backs, and live in a continued course of disobedience to it; or who apostatize from the doctrine of the word of God; wilfully deny the truth, after they have had a speculative knowledge of it, whose punishment is very grievous (Heb. x. 26—29); and now partly because of the daring impiety of wicked men, who stretch out their hands against God, and strengthen themselves against the Almighty, and run upon him, even on the thick bosses of his bucklers: because of the shocking nature of their sin, the sad examples thereby set to others, the detriment they are to themselves, and the dishonour they bring to God; and partly because of the dreadful punishment that shall be inflicted on them here, and especially hereafter, when a horrible tempest of wrath will come upon them. Hence such trembling seized the Psalmist: and often so it is, that good men tremble more for the wicked than they do for themselves: see verse 120.—*John Gill.*

*Verse* 54.—"*Thy statutes have been my songs.*" The Psalmist rejoiced, doubtless, as the good do now, 1. In law itself; law, as a rule of order; law, as a guide of conduct; law, as a security for safety. 2. In *such* a law as that of God—so pure, so holy, so fitted to promote the happiness of man. 3. In the stability of that law, as constituting his own personal security, the ground of his hope. 4. In law in its influence on the universe, preserving order and securing harmony.—*Albert Barnes.*

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*Verse* 54.—"*Thy statutes have been my songs.*" In the early ages it was customary to versify the laws, that the people might learn them by heart, and sing them.—*Williams.*

*Verse* 54.—"*Thy statutes have been my songs.*" God's statutes are here his "*songs*," which give him spiritual refreshing, sweeten the hardships of the pilgrimage, and measure and hasten his steps.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

*Verse* 54.—"*Songs.*" Travellers sing to deceive the tediousness of the way; so did David; and hereby he solaced himself under that horror which he speaks of in verse 53. Great is the comfort that cometh in by singing of Psalms with grace in our hearts.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 54.—"*Songs.*"

"Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.

"And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away."

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (1807—1882).

*Verse* 54.—"*Songs in the house of my pilgrimage.*" Wherefore is everything like warmth in religion branded with the name of enthusiasm? Warmth is expected in the poet, in the musician, in the scholar, in the lover—and even in the tradesman it is allowed, if not commended—why then is it condemned in the concerns of the soul—a subject which, infinitely above all others, demands and deserves all the energy of the mind? Would a prisoner exult at the proclamation of deliverance, and is the redeemed sinner to walk forth from his bondage, unmoved, unaffected, without gratitude or joy? No, "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Shall the condemned criminal feel I know not what emotions, when instead of the execution of the sentence he receives a pardon? and is the absolved transgressor to be senseless and silent? No. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: and not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

Other travellers are accustomed to relieve the tediousness of their journey with a song. The Israelites, when they repaired from the extremities of the country three times a year to Jerusalem to worship, had songs appointed for the purpose, and travelled singing as they went. And of the righteous it is said, "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord. The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads."—*William Jay.*

*Verse* 54.—"*Songs in the house of my pilgrimage.*" See how the Lord in his wise dispensation attempers himself to our infirmities. Our life is subject to many changes, and God by his word hath provided for us also many instructions and remedies. Every cross hath its own remedy, and every state of life its own instruction. Sometimes our grief is so great that we cannot sing; then let us pray: sometimes our deliverance so joyful that we must break out in thanksgiving; then let us sing. "If any man among you be afflicted, let him pray; if he be merry, let him sing." Prayers for every cross, and psalms for every deliverance, hath God by his own Spirit penned for us; so that now we are more than inexcusable if we fail in this duty.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 54.—"*In the house of my pilgrimage.*" According to the original,

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"*the house of my pilgrimages*"; that is, whatever places I have wandered to during Saul's persecution of me.—*Samuel Burder.*

*Verse* 54.—"*In the house of my pilgrimage.*" Vatablus expounds this of his banishment amongst the Philistines; that when he was put from his native country and kindred, and all other comforts failed him, the word of the Lord furnished matter of joy to him. And indeed, the banishment of God's servants may cast them far from their kindred and acquaintance; but it chaseth them nearer to the Lord, and the Lord nearer to them. Proof of this in Jacob, when he was banished, and lay without, all night in the fields, he found a more familiar presence of God than he did when he slept in the tent with father and mother.

But we may rather, with Basil, refer it to the whole time of David's mortal life: *omnem vitam suam peregrinationem vocare arbitror.* So Jacob acknowledgeth to Pharaoh, that his life was a pilgrimage; and Abraham and Isaac dwelt in the world as strangers.

S. Peter therefore teacheth us as pilgrims to abstain from the lusts of the flesh; and S. Paul, to use this world as if we used it not; for the fashion thereof goeth away. Many ways are we taught this lesson; but slow are we to learn it. Alas, what folly is this, that a man should desire to dwell in the earth, when God calleth him to be a citizen of heaven! Yet great is the comfort we have of this, that the houses wherein we lodge upon earth are but *houses of our pilgrimage.* The faithful Israelites endured their bondage in Egypt the more patiently, because they knew they were to be delivered from it. If the houses of our servitude were eternal mansions, how lamentable were our condition! But God be thanked, they are but wayfaring cottages, and houses of our pilgrimage. Such a house was the womb of our mother: if we had been enclosed there for ever, what burden had it been to her, what bondage to ourselves! Such a house will be the grave; of the which we must all say with Job, "The grave shall be my house, and I shall make my bed in the dark." If we were there to abide for ever, how comfortless were our estate. But, God be praised, our mansion house is above; and the houses we exchange here on earth are but the houses of our pilgrimage; and happy is he who can so live in the world as esteeming himself in his own house, in his own bed, yea, in his own body, to be but a stranger, in respect of his absence from the Lord.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 54.—"*My pilgrimage.*" If men have been termed pilgrims, and life a journey, then we may add that the Christian pilgrimage far surpasses all others in the following important particulars:—in the goodness of the road, in the beauty of the prospects, in the excellence of the company, and in the vast superiority of the accommodation provided for the Christian traveller when he has finished his course.—*H. G. Salter, in "The Book of Illustrations,"* 1840.

*Verse* 55.—"*I have remembered thy name, O* LORD, *in the night,*" etc. As the second clause of the verse depends on the first, I consider the whole verse as setting forth one and the same truth; and, therefore, the prophet means that he was induced, by the remembrance he had of God, to keep the law. Contempt of the law originates in this, that few have any regard for God; and hence, the Scripture, in condemning the impiety of men, declares that they *have forgotten* God (Psalm l. 22; lxxviii. 11; cvi. 21.) . . . .

The word "*night*" is not intended by him to mean the remembering of God merely for a short time, but a perpetual remembrance of him; he, however, refers to that season in particular, because then almost all our senses are overpowered with sleep. "When other men are sleeping, God occurs to my thoughts during my sleep." He has another reason for alluding to the night-season—that we may be apprised, that though there was none to observe him, and none to put him in remembrance of it; yea, though he was

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shrouded in darkness, yet he was as solicitous to cherish the remembrance of God as if he occupied the most public and conspicuous place.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 55.—"*I have remembered thy name in the night,*" and therefore I "*have kept thy law*" all day.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 55.—"*I have remembered thy name, O* LORD, *in the night.*" This verse contains a new protestation of his honest affection toward the word of God. Wherein, first, let us mark his *sincerity;* he was religious not only in public, but in private; for private exercises are the surest trials of true religion. In public, oftentimes hypocrisy carries men to simulate that which they are not; it is not so in the private devotion; for then, either doth a man, if he make no conscience of God's worship, utterly neglect it, because there is no eye of man to see him; or otherwise if he be indeed religious, even in private he presents his heart to God, seeking it to be approved by him; for his "praise is not of man, but of God."

Again, this argueth his *fervency* in religion: for as elsewhere he protests that he loved the word more than his appointed food; so here he protests that he gave up his night's rest that he might meditate in the word. But now, so far is zeal decayed in professors, that they will not forego their superfluities, far less their needful refreshment, for love of the word of God.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 55.—"*Thy name, O Lord.*" The "*name*" of the Lord is his character, his nature, his attributes, the manifestations he hath made of his holiness, his wisdom, goodness and truth.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 55.—"*In the night.*" First, that is, *continually*, because he remembered God in the day also. Secondly, *sincerely*, because he avoided the applause of men. Thirdly, *cheerfully*, because the heaviness of natural sleep could not overcome him. All these show that he was *intensely* given to the word; as we see men of the world will take some part of the night for their delights. And in that he did keep God's testimonies in the night, he showeth that he was the same in secret that he was in the light; whereby he condemned all those that will cover their wickedness with the dark. Let us examine ourselves whether we have broken our sleeps to call upon God, as we have to fulfil our pleasures.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 55.—"*In the night.*" Pastor Harms of Hermansburg used to preach and pray and instruct his people for nine hours on the Sabbath. And then when his mind was utterly exhausted, and his whole body was thrilling with pain, and he seemed almost dying for the want of rest, he could get no sleep. But he used to say that he loved to lie awake all night in the silence and darkness and think of Jesus. The night put away everything else from his thoughts, and left his heart free to commune with the One whom his soul most devoutly loved, and who visited and comforted his weary disciple in the night watches. And so God's children have often enjoyed rare seasons of communion with him in the solitude of exile, in the deep gloom of the dungeon, in the perpetual night of blindness, and at times when all voices and instructions from the world have been most completely cut off, and the soul has been left alone with God.—*Daniel March, in "Night unto Night."* 1880.

*Verse* 55.—"*In the night.*" There is never a time in which it is not proper to turn to God and think on his name. In the darkness of midnight, in the darkness of mental depression, in the darkness of outward providences, God is still a fitting theme.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 55.—"*The night.*"—

"Dear night! this world's defeat;
The stop to busy fools; Care's check and curb;
The day of spirits; my soul's calm retreat
Which none disturb!
Christ's progress, and his prayer time;
The hours to which high heaven doth chime.

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"God's silent, searching flight;
When my Lord's head is filled with dew, and all
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;
His still, soft call;
His knocking time; the soul's dumb watch,
When spirits their fair kindred catch."

*Henry Vaughan*, 1621—1695.

*Verse* 55.—"*And have kept thy law*"; though imperfectly, yet spiritually, sincerely, heartily, and from a principle of love and gratitude, and with a view to the glory of God, and without mercenary, sinister ends.—*John Gill.*

*Verse* 55.—"*And have kept thy law.*" Hours of secret fellowship with God must issue in the desire of increased conformity to his holy will. It is the remembrance of God that leads to the keeping of his laws, as it is forgetfulness of God that fosters every species of transgression.—*John Morison.*

*Verse* 55.—"*And have kept.*" The verb is in the future, and perhaps is better so rendered, thus making it the expression of a solemn, deliberate purpose to continue his obedience.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verses* 55, 56.—He that delights to keep God's law, God will give him more grace to keep it, according to that remarkable text, "*I have remembered thy name, O* LORD, *in the night, and have kept thy law. This I had, because I kept thy precepts.*" What had David for keeping God's precepts? He had power to keep his law; that is, to grow and increase in keeping of it. As the prophet (Hosea vi. 3) speaks of the knowledge of God: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord"; that is, if we industriously labour to know God, we shall have this reward, to be made able to know him more. So may I say of the grace of God: he that delights to keep God's law shall have his reward,—to be enabled to keep it more perfectly. A true delight in God's word is grace increasing. Grace is the mother of all true joy (Isai. xxxii. 17), and joy is as the daughter, and the mother and daughter live and die together.—*Edmund Calamy* (1600—1666), *in* "*The Godly Man's Ark.*"

*Verse* 56.—"*This I had, because I kept thy precepts.*" As sin is a punishment of sin, and the wicked waxeth ever worse and worse; so godliness is the recompense of godliness. The right use of one talent encreaseth more, and the beginnings of godliness are blessed with a growth of godliness. David's good exercises here held him in memory of his God, and the memory of God made him more godly and religious.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 56.—"*This I had,*" etc. The Rabbins have an analogous saying,—*The reward of a precept is a precept;* or, *A precept draws a precept.* The meaning of which is, that he who keeps one precept, to him God grants, as if by way of reward, the ability to keep another and more difficult precept. The contrary to this is that other saying of the Rabbins, that *the reward of a sin is a sin;* or, *Transgression draws transgression.*—*Simon de Muis*, 1587—1644.

*Verse* 56.—"*This I had,*" that is, this happened to me, etc. I experienced many evils and adversities; but, on the other hand, I drew sweetest consolations from the word, and I was crowned with many blessings from God.

Others thus render it, This is my business, This I care for and desire, to keep thy commandments; *i.e.*, to hold fast the doctrine incorrupt with faith and a good conscience.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

*Verse* 56.—"*This I had,*" etc. I had the comfort of keeping thy law *because I kept it.* God's work is its own wages.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 56.—"*This I had,*" etc. What is that? This comfort I had, this supportation I had in all my afflictions, this consolation I had, this sweet communion with God I had. Why? "*Because I kept thy precepts,*" I obeyed thy will. Look, how much obedience is yielded to the commands of God, so much comfort doth flow into the soul: God usually gives in comforts proportionably to our obedience. O the sweet, soul-satisfying consolation a

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child of God finds in the ways of God, and in doing the will of God, especially when he lies on his death-bed; then it will be sweeter to him than honey and the honeycomb; then will he say with good king Hezekiah, when he lay upon his death-bed, "Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which was good in thy sight." O the sweet satisfaction that a soul shall find in God, when he comes to appear before God!—*James Nalton*, 1664.

*Verse* 56.—"*This I had*," etc. Or, "This was my *consolation*, that I kept thy precepts;" which is nearly the reading of the Syriac, and renders the sense more complete.—*Note in Bagster's Comprehensive Bible.*

*Verse* 56.—"*This I had*," etc. When I hear the faithful people of God telling of his love, and saying—"*This I had*," must I not, if unable to join their cheerful acknowledgment, trace it to my unfaithful walk, and say—"This I had not"—because I have failed in obedience to thy precepts; because I have been careless and self-indulgent; because I have slighted thy love; because I have "grieved thy Holy Spirit," and forgotten to "ask for the old paths, that I might walk therein, and find rest to my soul"? Jer. vi. 16.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 56.—David saith indefinitely, "*This I had*"; not telling us what good or privilege it was; only in the general, it was some benefit that accrued to him in this life. He doth not say, This I hope for; but, "*This I had*;" and therefore he doth not speak of the full reward in the life to come. In heaven we come to receive the full reward of obedience; but a close walker, that waiteth upon God in an humble and constant obedience, shall have sufficient encouragement even in this life. Not only he shall be blessed, but he is blessed; he hath something on hand as well as in hope: as David saith in this the 119th Psalm, not only he shall be blessed, but he is blessed; as they that travelled towards Zion, they met with a well by the way: "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools" (Ps. lxxxiv. 6). In a dry and barren wilderness, through which they were to pass, they were not left wholly comfortless, but met with a well or a cistern; that is, they had some comfort vouchsafed to them before they came to enjoy God's presence in Zion; some refreshments they had by the way. As servants, that, besides their wages, have their veils; so, besides the recompense of reward hereafter, we have our present comforts and supports during our course of service, which are enough to counterbalance all worldly joys, and outweigh the greatest pleasures that men can expect in the way of sin. In the benefits that believers find by walking with God in a course of obedience every one can say, "*This I had, because I kept thy precepts.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 57 TO 64.

*THOU art* my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.

58 I intreated thy favour with *my* whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

59 I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

60 I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

61 The bands of the wicked have robbed me: *but* I have not forgotten thy law.

62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.

63 I *am* a companion of all *them* that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

In this section the Psalmist seems to take firm hold upon God himself; appropriating him (57), crying out for him (58), returning to him (59), solacing himself in him (61, 62), associating with his people (63), and sighing for personal experience of his goodness (64). Note how the first verse of this octave is linked to the last of the former one, of which indeed it is an expanded repetition. "This I had because I kept thy precepts. Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words."

57. "*Thou art my portion, O* LORD." A broken sentence. The translators have mended it by insertions, but perhaps it had been better to have left it alone, and then it would have appeared as an exclamation,—"My portion, O Lord!" The poet is lost in wonder while he sees that the great and glorious God is all his own! Well might he be so, for there is no possession like Jehovah himself. The form of the sentence expresses joyous recognition and appropriation,—"My portion, O Jehovah!" David had often seen the prey divided, and heard the victors shouting over it; here he rejoices as one who seizes his share of the spoil; he chooses the Lord to be his part of the treasure. Like the Levites, he took God to be his portion, and left other matters to those who coveted them. This is a large and lasting heritage, for it includes all, and more than all, and it outlasts all; and yet no man chooses it for himself until God has chosen and renewed him. Who that is truly wise could hesitate for a moment when the infinitely blessed God is set before him to be the object of his choice? David leaped at the opportunity, and grasped the priceless boon. Our author here dares exhibit the title-deeds of his portion before the eye of the Lord himself, for he addresses his joyful utterance directly to God whom he boldly calls his own. With much else to choose from, for he was a king, and a man of great resources, he deliberately turns from all the treasures of the world, and declares that the Lord, even Jehovah, is his portion.

"*I have said that I would keep thy words.*" We cannot always look back with comfort upon what we have said, but in this instance David had spoken wisely and well. He had declared his choice: he preferred the word of God to the wealth of worldlings. It was his firm resolve to keep—that is, treasure up and observe—the words of his God, and as he had aforetime solemnly expressed it in the presence of the Lord himself, so here he confesses the binding obligation of his former vow. Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words," and this is a case which he might have



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quoted as an illustration; for the Psalmist's love to God as his portion led to his keeping the words of God. David took God to be his Prince as well as his Portion. He was confident as to his interest in God, and therefore he was resolute in his obedience to him. Full assurance is a powerful source of holiness. The very words of God are to be stored up; for whether they relate to doctrine, promise, or precept, they are most precious. When the heart is determined to keep these words, and has registered its purpose in the court of heaven, it is prepared for all the temptations and trials that may befall it; for, with God as its heritage, it is always in good case.

58. "*I intreated thy favour with my whole heart.*" A fully assured possession of God does not set aside prayer, but rather urges us to it; he who knows God to be his God will seek his face, longing for his presence. Seeking God's presence is the idea conveyed by the marginal reading, "thy face," and this is true to the Hebrew. The presence of God is the highest form of his favour, and therefore it is the most urgent desire of gracious souls: the light of his countenance gives us an antepast of heaven. O that we always enjoyed it! The good man entreated God's smile as one who begged for his life, and the entire strength of his desire went with the entreaty. Such eager pleadings are sure of success; that which comes from our heart will certainly go to God's heart. The whole of God's favours are ready for those who seek them with their whole hearts.

"*Be merciful unto me according to thy word.*" He has entreated favour, and the form in which he most needs it is that of mercy, for he is more a sinner than anything else. He asks nothing beyond the promise, he only begs for such mercy as the word reveals. And what more could he want or wish for? God has revealed such an infinity of mercy in his word that it would be impossible to conceive of more. See how the Psalmist dwells upon favour and mercy, he never dreams of merit. He does not demand, but entreat; for he feels his own unworthiness. Note how he remains a suppliant, though he knows that he has all things in his God. God is his portion, and yet he begs for a look at his face. The idea of any other standing before God than that of an undeserving but favoured one never entered his head. Here we have his "Be merciful unto me" rising with as much intensity of humble pleading as if he still remained among the most trembling of penitents. The confidence of faith makes us bold in prayer, but it never teaches us to live without prayer, or justifies us in being other than humble beggars at mercy's gate.

59. "*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" While studying the word he was led to study his own life, and this caused a mighty revolution. He came to the word, and then he came to himself, and this made him arise and go to his Father. Consideration is the commencement of conversion: first we think and then we turn. When the mind repents of ill ways the feet are soon led into good ways; but there will be no repenting until there is deep, earnest thought. Many men are averse to thought of any kind, and as to thought upon their ways, they cannot endure it, for their ways will not bear thinking of. David's ways had not been all that he could have wished them to be, and so his thoughts were sobered o'er with the pale cast of regret; but he did not end with idle lamentations, he set about a practical amendment; he turned and returned, he sought the testimonies of the Lord, and hastened to enjoy once more the conscious favour of his heavenly friend. Action without thought is folly, and thought without action is sloth: to think carefully and then to act promptly is a happy combination. He had entreated for renewed fellowship, and now he proved the genuineness of his desire by renewed obedience. If we are in the dark, and mourn an absent God, our wisest method will be not so much to think upon our sorrows as upon our ways: though we cannot turn the course of providence, we can turn the way of our walking, and this will soon mend matters. If we can get our feet right as

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to holy walking, we shall soon get our hearts right as to happy living. God will turn to his saints when they turn to him; yea, he has already favoured them with the light of his face when they begin to think and turn.

60. "*I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*" He made all speed to get back into the royal road from which he had wandered, and to run in that road upon the King's errands. Speed in repentance and speed in obedience are two excellent things. We are too often in haste to sin; O that we may be in a greater hurry to obey. Delay in sin is increase of sin. To be slow to keep the commands is really to break them. There is much evil in a lagging pace when God's command is to be followed. A holy alacrity in service is much to be cultivated. It is wrought in us by the Spirit of God, and the preceding verses describe the method of it: we are made to perceive and mourn our errors, we are led to return to the right path, and then we are eager to make up for lost time by dashing forward to fulfil the precept.

Whatever may be the slips and wanderings of an honest heart, there remains enough of true life in it to produce ardent piety when once it is quickened by the visitations of God. The Psalmist entreated for mercy, and when he received it he became eager and vehement in the Lord's ways. He had always loved them, and hence when he was enriched with grace he displayed great vivacity and delight in them. He made double speed; for positively he "made haste," and negatively he refused to yield to any motive which suggested procrastination,—he "delayed not." Thus he made rapid advances and accomplished much service, fulfilling thereby the vow which is recorded in the 57th verse: "I said that I would keep thy words." The commands which he was so eager to obey were not ordinances of man, but precepts of the Most High. Many are zealous to obey custom and society, and yet they are slack in serving God. It is a crying shame that men should be served post-haste, and that God's work should have the go-by, or be performed with dreamy negligence.

61. "*The bands of the wicked have robbed me.*" Aforetime they derided him, and now they have defrauded him. Ungodly men grow worse, and become more and more daring, so that they go from ridicule to robbery. Much of this bold opposition arose from their being banded together: men will dare to do in company what they durst not have thought of alone. When firebrands are laid together there is no telling what a flame they will create. It seems that whole bands of men assailed this one child of God, they are cowardly enough for anything; though they could not kill him, they robbed him; the dogs of Satan will worry saints if they cannot devour them. David's enemies did their utmost: first the serpents hissed, and then they stung. Since words availed not, the wicked fell to blows. How much the ungodly have plundered the saints in all ages, and how often have the righteous borne gladly the spoiling of their goods!

"*But I have not forgotten thy law.*" This was well. Neither his sense of injustice, nor his sorrow at his losses, nor his attempts at defence diverted him from the ways of God. He would not do wrong to prevent the suffering of wrong, nor do ill to avenge ill. He carried the law in his heart, and therefore no disturbance of mind could take him off from following it. He might have forgotten himself if he had forgotten the law: as it was, he was ready to forgive and forget the injuries done him, for his heart was taken up with the word of God. The bands of the wicked had not robbed him of his choicest treasure, since they had left him his holiness and his happiness.

Some read this passage, "The bands of the wicked environ me." They hemmed him in, they cut him off from succour, they shut up every avenue of escape, but the man of God had his protector with him; a clear conscience relied upon the promise, and a brave resolve stuck to the precept. He could not be either bribed or bullied into sin. The cordon of the ungodly could not keep God from him, nor him from God: this was because God

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was his portion, and none could deprive him of it either by force or fraud. That is true grace which can endure the test: some are barely gracious among the circle of their friends, but this man was holy amid a ring of foes.

62. "*At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.*" He was not afraid of the robbers; he rose, not to watch his house, but to praise his God. Midnight is the hour for burglars, and there were bands of them around David, but they did not occupy his thoughts; these were all up and away with the Lord his God. He thought not of thieves, but of thanks; not of what *they* would steal, but of what *he* would give to his God. A thankful heart is such a blessing that it drives out fear and makes room for praise. Thanksgiving turns night into day, and consecrates all hours to the worship of God. Every hour is canonical to a saint.

The Psalmist observed posture; he did not lie in bed and praise. There is not much in the position of the body, but there is something, and that something is to be observed whenever it is helpful to devotion and expressive of our diligence or humility. Many kneel without praying, some pray without kneeling; but the best is to kneel and pray: so here, it would have been no virtue to rise without giving thanks, and it would have been no sin to give thanks without rising; but to rise and give thanks is a happy combination. As for the season, it was quiet, lonely, and such as proved his zeal. At midnight he would be unobserved and undisturbed; it was his own time which he saved from his sleep, and so he would be free from the charge of sacrificing public duties to private devotions. Midnight ends one day and begins another, it was therefore meet to give the solemn moments to communion with the Lord. At the turn of the night he turned to his God. He had thanks to give for mercies which God had given: he had on his mind the truth of verse fifty-seven, "Thou art my portion," and if anything can make a man sing in the middle of the night that is it.

The *righteous* doings of the great Judge gladdened the heart of this godly man. His *judgments* are the terrible side of God, but they have no terror to the righteous; they admire them, and adore the Lord for them: they rise at night to bless God that he will avenge his own elect. Some hate the very notion of divine justice, and in this they are wide as the poles asunder from this man of God, who was filled with joyful gratitude at the memory of the sentences of the Judge of all the earth. Doubtless in the expression, "thy righteous judgments," David refers also to the written judgments of God upon various points of moral conduct; indeed, all the divine precepts may be viewed in that light; they are all of them the legal decisions of the Supreme Arbiter of right and wrong. David was charmed with these judgments. Like Paul, he could say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." He could not find time enough by day to study the words of divine wisdom, or to bless God for them, and so he gave up his sleep that he might tell out his gratitude for such a law and such a Lawgiver.

This verse is an advance upon the sense of verse fifty-two, and contains in addition the essence of fifty-five. Our author never repeats himself: though he runs up and down the same scale, his music has an infinite variety. The permutations and combinations which may be formed in connection with a few vital truths are innumerable.

63. "*I am a companion of all them that fear thee.*" The last verse said, "I will," and this says, "I am." We can hardly hope to be right in the future unless we are right now. The holy man spent his nights with God and his days with God's people. Those who fear God love those who fear him, and they make small choice in their company so long as the men are truly God-fearing. David was a king, and yet he consorted with "*all*" who feared the Lord, whether they were obscure or famous, poor or rich. He was a fellow-commoner of the College of All-saints.

He did not select a few specially eminent saints and leave ordinary

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believers alone. No, he was glad of the society of those who had only the beginning of wisdom in the shape of "the fear of the Lord": he was pleased to sit with them on the lower forms of the school of faith. He looked for inward godly fear, but he also expected to see outward piety in those whom he admitted to his society; hence he adds, "*and of them that keep thy precepts.*" If they would keep the Lord's commands the Lord's servant would keep their company. David was known to be on the godly side, he was ever of the Puritanic party: the men of Belial hated him for this, and no doubt despised him for keeping such unfashionable company as that of humble men and women who are strait-laced and religious; but the man of God is by no means ashamed of his associates; so far from this, he even glories to avow his union with them, let his enemies make what they can of it. He found both pleasure and profit in saintly society: he grew better by consorting with the good, and derived honour from keeping right honourable company. What says the reader? Does he relish holy society? Is he at home among gracious people? If so he may derive comfort from the fact. Birds of a feather flock together. A man is known by his company. Those who have no fear of God before their eyes seldom desire the society of saints; it is too slow, too dull for them. Be this our comfort, that when we are let go by death we shall go to our own company, and those who loved the saints on earth shall be numbered with them in heaven.

There is a measure of parallelism between this seventh of its octave and the seventh of Teth (71) and of Jod (79); but, as a rule, the similarities which were so manifest in earlier verses are now becoming dim. As the sense deepens, the artificial form of expression is less regarded.

64. "*The earth, O* LORD, *is full of thy mercy.*" David had been exiled, but he had never been driven beyond the range of mercy, for he found the world to be everywhere filled with it. He had wandered in deserts and hidden in caves, and there he had seen and felt the lovingkindness of the Lord. He had learned that far beyond the bounds of the land of promise and the race of Israel the love of Jehovah extended, and in this verse he expressed that large-hearted idea of God which is so seldom seen in the modern Jew. How sweet it is to us to know that not only is there mercy all over the world, but there is such an abundance of it that the earth is "full" of it. It is little wonder that the Psalmist, since he knew the Lord to be his portion, hoped to obtain a measure of this mercy for himself, and so was encouraged to pray, "*teach me thy statutes.*" It was to him the *beau-ideal* of mercy to be taught of God, and taught in God's own law. He could not think of a greater mercy than this. Surely he who fills the universe with his grace will grant such a request as this to his own child. Let us breathe the desire to the All-merciful Jehovah, and we may be assured of its fulfilment.

The first verse of this eight is fragrant with full assurance and strong resolve, and this last verse overflows with a sense of the divine fulness, and of the Psalmist's personal dependence. This is an illustration of the fact that full assurance neither damps prayer nor hinders humility. It would be no error if we said that it creates lowliness and suggests supplication. "Thou art my portion, O Lord," is well followed by "teach me"; for the heir of a great estate should be thoroughly educated, that his behaviour may comport with his fortune. What manner of disciples ought we to be whose inheritance is the Lord of hosts? Those who have God for their Portion long to have him for their Teacher. Moreover, those who have resolved to obey are the most eager to be taught. "I have said that I would keep thy words" is beautifully succeeded by "teach me thy statutes." Those who wish to keep a law are anxious to know all its clauses and provisions lest they should offend through inadvertence. He who does not care to be instructed of the Lord has never honestly resolved to be holy.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 57 TO 64.

This begins a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Cheth*, which may be represented in English by *hh.—Albert Barnes.*

*Verses* 57—64.—In this section David laboureth to confirm his faith, and to comfort himself in the certainty of his regeneration, by eight properties of a sound believer, or eight marks of a new creature. The first whereof is his choosing of God for his portion. Whence learn, 1. Such as God hath chosen and effectually called, they get grace to make God their choice, their delight, and their portion; and such as have chosen God for their portion have an evidence of their regeneration and election also; for here David maketh this a mark of his regeneration: "*Thou art my portion.*" 2. It is another mark of regeneration, after believing in God, and choosing him for our portion, to resolve to bring forth the fruits of faith in new obedience, as David did: "*I have said that I would keep thy words.*" 3. As it is usual for God's children, now and then because of sin falling out, to be exercised with a sense of God's displeasure, so it is a mark of a new creature not to lie stupid and senseless under this exercise, but to deal with God earnestly, for restoring the sense of reconciliation, and giving new experience of his mercy, as the Psalmist did; "*I intreated thy favour with my whole heart;*" and this is the third evidence of a new creature. 4. The penitent believer hath the word of grace and the covenant of God for his assurance to be heard when he seeketh mercy: "*Be merciful unto me according to thy word.*" 5. The searching in what condition we are in, and examination of our ways according to the word, and renewing of repentance, with an endeavour of amendment, is a fourth mark of a new creature: "*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" 6. When we do see our sin we are naturally slow to amend our doings; but the sooner we turn us to the way of God's obedience, we speed the better, and the more speedy the reforming of our life be, the more sound mark is it of a new creature: "*I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*" 7. Enduring of persecution and spoiling of our goods, for adhering to God's word, without forsaking of his cause, is a fifth mark of a new creature: "*The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy law.*" 8. As it is the lot of God's children who resolve to be godly, to suffer persecution, and to be forced either to lose their temporal goods or else to lose a good cause and a good conscience; so it is the wisdom of the godly to remember what the Lord's word requireth of us and speaketh unto us, and this shall comfort our conscience more than the loss of things temporal can trouble our minds: "*The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy law.*" 9. A sixth mark of a new creature is, to be so far from fretting under hard exercise as to thank God in secret cheerfully for his gracious word, and for all the passages of his providence, where none seeth us, and where there is no hazard of ostentation: "*At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.*" 10. A seventh mark of a renewed creature is, to associate ourselves and keep communion with such as are truly gracious, and do fear God indeed, as we are able to discern them: "*I am a companion of all them that fear thee.*" 11. The fear of God is evidenced by believing and obeying the doctrine and direction of the Scripture, and no other ways: "*I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.*" 12. The eighth mark of a new creature is, not to rest in any measure of renovation, but earnestly to deal with God for the increase of saving knowledge, and fruitful obedience of it; for, "*Teach me thy statutes,*" is the prayer of the man of God, in whom all the former marks are found. 13. As the whole of the creatures are witnesses of God's bounty to man, and partakers of that bounty themselves, so are they pawns of God's pleasure to bestow upon his servants greater gifts than these, even

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the increase of sanctification, in further illumination of mind and reformation of life: for this the Psalmist useth for an argument to be more and more sanctified: "*The earth, O* LORD, *is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.*"—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 57.—"*Thou art my portion, O* LORD." The sincerity of this claim may be gathered, because he speaks by way of address to God. He doth not say barely, "He is my portion"; but challengeth God to his face: "*Thou art my portion, O* LORD." Elsewhere it is said, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul" (Lam. iii. 24). There he doth not speak it by way of address to God, but he adds, "saith my soul"; but here to God himself, who knows the secrets of the heart. To speak thus of God to God, argues our sincerity, when to God's face we avow our trust and choice; as Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (John xxi. 17).—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 57.—"*Thou art my portion, O* LORD." Luther counsels every Christian to answer all temptations with this short saying, "*Christianus sum,*" I am a Christian; and I would counsel every Christian to answer all temptations with this short saying, "The Lord is my portion." O Christian, when Satan or the world shall tempt thee with honours, answer, "The Lord is my portion"; when they shall tempt thee with riches, answer, "The Lord is my portion"; when they shall tempt thee with preferments, answer, "The Lord is my portion"; and when they shall tempt thee with the favours of great ones, answer, "The Lord is my portion"; yea, and when this persecuting world shall threaten thee with the loss of thy estate, answer, "The Lord is my portion"; and when they shall threaten thee with the loss of thy liberty, answer, "The Lord is my portion"; and when they shall threaten thee with the loss of friends, answer, "The Lord is my portion"; and when they shall threaten thee with the loss of life, answer, "The Lord is my portion." O, sir, if Satan should come to thee with an apple, as once he did to Eve, tell him that "the Lord is your portion"; or with a grape, as once he did to Noah, tell him that "the Lord is your portion"; or with a change of raiment, as once he did to Gehazi, tell him that "the Lord is your portion"; or with a wedge of gold, as once he did to Achan, tell him that "the Lord is your portion"; or with a bag of money, as once he did to Judas, tell him that "the Lord is your portion"; or with a crown, a kingdom, as once he did to Moses, tell him that "the Lord is your portion."—*Thomas Brooks.*

*Verse* 57.—"*Thou art my portion, O* LORD." God is all sufficient; get him for your "*portion,*" and you have all; then you have infinite wisdom to direct you, infinite knowledge to teach you, infinite mercy to pity and save you, infinite love to care and comfort you, and infinite power to protect and keep you. If God be yours, all his attributes are yours; all his creatures, all his works of providence, shall do you good, as you have need of them. He is an eternal, full, satisfactory portion. He is an ever-living, ever-loving, ever-present friend; and without him you are a cursed creature in every condition, and all things will work against you.—*John Mason,* —1694.

*Verse* 57.—"*Thou art my portion, O* LORD." If there was a moment in the life of David in which one might feel inclined to envy him, it would not be in that flush of youthful victory, when Goliath lay prostrate at his feet, nor in that hour of even greater triumph, when the damsels of Israel sang his praise in the dance, saying, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands"; it would not be on that royal day, when his undisputed claim to the throne of Israel was acknowledged on every side and by every tribe; but it would be in that moment when, with a loving and trustful heart, he looked up to God and said, "*Thou art my portion.*" In a later Psalm (cxlii.), which bears with it as its title, "A prayer of David, when he

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was in the cave," we have the very same expression: "I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." It adds immeasurably to such an expression, if we believe it to have been uttered at a time when every other possession and inheritance was taken from him, and the Lord alone was his portion.—*Barton Bouchier.*

*Verse* 57.—He is an exceedingly covetous fellow to whom God is not sufficient; and he is an exceeding fool to whom the world is sufficient. For God is an inexhaustible treasury of all riches, sufficing innumerable men; while the world has mere trifles and fascinations to offer, and leads the soul into deep and sorrowful poverty.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse* 57.—They who are without an ample patrimony in this life, may make to themselves a portion in heavenly blessedness.—*Solomon Gesner.*

*Verse* 57.—"*I have said that I would keep thy words.*" This he brings in by way of proving that which he said in the former words. Many will say with David, that God is their portion; but here is the point: how do they prove it? If God were their portion, they would love him; if they loved him they would love his word; if they loved his word they would live by it and make it the rule of their life.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 57.—"*I have said that I would keep thy words.*" He was resolved to keep his commandments, lay up his promises, observe his ordinances, profess and retain a belief in his doctrines.—*John Gill.*

*Verse* 58.—"*I entreated thy favour,*" or; I seek thy face. To seek the face is to come into the presence. Thus the Hebrews speak when desirous of expressing that familiar intercourse to which God admits his people when he bids them make known their requests. It is truly the same as speaking face to face with God.—*Franciscus Vatablus,* 1545.

*Verse* 58.—"*I entreated thy favour with my whole heart.*" I have often remarked how graciously and lovingly the Lord delights to return an answer to prayer in the very words that have gone up before him, as if to assure us that they have reached his ear, and been speeded back again from him laden with increase. "*I entreated thy favour with my whole heart.*" Hear the Lord's answer to his praying people: "I will rejoice over them to do them good assuredly *with my whole heart and with my whole soul.*"—*Barton Bouchier.*

*Verse* 58.—"*With my whole heart.*" The Hebrew expresses great earnestness and humility in supplication.—*A. R. Fausset.*

*Verse* 58.—"*With my whole heart.*" Prayer is chiefly a heart-work. God heareth the heart without the mouth, but never heareth the mouth acceptably without the heart.—*Walter Marshall.*

*Verse* 58.—"*Be merciful unto me,*" etc. He protested before that he sought the Lord with his whole heart, and now he prayeth that he may find mercy. So indeed it shall be; boldly may that man look for mercy at God's hand who seeks him truly. Mercy and truth are wont to meet together, and embrace one another: where truth is in the soul to seek, there cannot but be mercy in God to embrace. If truth be in us to confess our sins and forsake them, we shall find mercy in God to pardon and forgive them.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 58.—"*According to thy word.*" He prayeth not for what he lusteth after, but for that which the Lord promised; for St. James saith, "You pray and have not," etc., and this is the cause, that we have not the thing we pray for, because we pray not according to the word. His word must be the rule of our prayers, and then we shall receive; as Solomon prayed and obtained. God hath promised forgiveness of sins, the knowledge of his word, and many other blessings. If we have these, let not our hearts be set on other things.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 58.—"*According to thy word.*" The Word of God may be divided into three parts; into commandments, threatenings, and promises; and

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though a Christian must not neglect the commanding and threatening word, yet if ever he would make the Word a channel for Divine comfort, he must study the promising word; for the promises are a Christian's magna charta for heaven. All comfort must be built upon a Scripture promise, else it is presumption, not true comfort. The promises are *pabulum fidei, et anima fidei*, the food of faith, and the soul of faith. As faith is the life of a Christian, so the promises are the life of faith: faith is a dead faith if it hath no promise to quicken it. As the promises are of no use without faith to apply them, so faith is of no use without a promise to lay hold on.—*Edmund Calamy.*

*Verse* 58.—The rule and ground of confidence is, "*according to thy word.*" God's word is the rule of our confidence; for therein is God's stated course. If we would have favour and mercy from God, it must be upon his own terms. God will accept of us in Christ, if we repent, believe, and obey, and seek his favour diligently: he will not deny those who seek, ask, knock. Many would have mercy, but will not observe God's direction. We must ask according to God's will, not without a promise, nor against a command. God is made a voluntary debtor by his promise. These are notable props of faith, when we are encouraged to seek by the offer, and urged to apply by the promise. We thrive no more in a comfortable sense of God's love, because we take not this course.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 59.—"*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" The transition which is made in the text from the occasion of this alteration, "*I thought on my ways,*" to the change itself, is very lofty and elegant. He does not tell us that, after a review of them, he saw the folly and danger of sin, the debasedness of its pleasures, and the poison of its delights; or that, upon a search into God's law, he was convinced that what he imagined so severe, rigid, and frightful before, was now all amiable and lovely; no, but immediately adds, "*I turned my feet unto thy testimonies*"; than which I can conceive nothing more noble or strong; for it emphatically says, that there was no need to express the appearance his ways had when once he thought upon them. What must be the consequence of his deliberation was so plain, namely, that sin never prevails but where it is masked over with some false beauties, and the inconsiderate, foolish sinner credulously gives ear to its enchantments, and is not at pains and care to enquire into them; for a deep, thorough search would soon discover that its fairest appearances are but lying vanities, and that he who is captivated with that empty show is in the same circumstances with a person in a dream, who can please himself with his fancy only while asleep, and that his awakening out of it no sooner or more certainly discovers the cheat, than a serious thinking upon the ways of iniquity and rebellion against God will manifest the fatal madness of men in ever pursuing them.—*William Dunlop*, 1692—1720.

*Verse* 59.—"*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" Some translate the original, I looked on both sides upon my ways, I considered them every way, "and turned my feet unto thy testimonies" I considered that I was wandering like a lost sheep, and then I returned.—*George Swinnock.*

*Verse* 59.—"*I thought on my ways,*" etc. The Hebrew word חשב that is here used for thinking, signifies to think on a man's ways accurately, advisedly, seriously, studiously, curiously. This holy man of God thought exactly and curiously on all his purposes and practices, on all his doings and sayings, on all his words and works, and finding too many of them to be short of the rule, yea, to be against the rule, he turned his feet to God's testimonies; having found out his errors, upon a diligent search, a strict scrutiny, he turned over a new leaf, and framed his course more exactly by rule. O Christians! you must look as well to your spiritual wants as to your spiritual enjoyments; you must look as well to your layings out as to your layings up; you must look

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as well forward to what you should be, as backward to what you are. Certainly that Christian will never be eminent in holiness that hath many eyes to behold a little holiness, and never an eye to see his further want of holiness.—*Thomas Brooks.*

*Verse* 59.—"*I thought on my ways.*" The word signifies a fixed, abiding thought. Some make it an allusion to those that work embroidery; that are very exact and careful to cover the least flaw; or to those that cast accounts. Reckon with yourselves, What do I owe? what am I worth? "*I thought*" not only on my wealth, as the covetous man, Ps. xlix. 11; but "*on my ways*"; not what I have, but what I do; because what we do will follow us into another world, when what we have must be left behind. Many are critical enough in their remarks upon other people's ways that never think of their own, but "let every man prove his own work."

This account which David here gives of himself may refer either to his constant practice every day; he reflected on his ways at night, directed his feet to God's testimonies in the morning, and what his hand found to do that was good he did it without delay: or it may refer to his first acquaintance with God and religion, when he began to throw off the vanity of childhood and youth, and to remember his Creator; that blessed change was by the grace of God thus wrought. Note, 1. Conversion begins in serious consideration; Ezek. xviii. 28; Luke xv. 17. 2. Consideration must end in a sound conversion. To what purpose have we thought on our ways, if we do not turn our feet with all speed to God's testimonies?—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 59.—"*I thought on my ways.*" Be frequent in this work of serious consideration. If daily you called yourselves to an account, all acts of grace would thrive the better. Seneca asked of Sextius, *Quod hodie malum sanasti? cui vitio obstitisti?* You have God's example in reviewing every day's work, and in dealing with Adam before he slept. The man that was unclean was to wash his clothes at eventide.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 59.—"*I thought on my ways,*" etc. Poisons may be made medicinable. Let the thoughts of old sins stir up a commotion of anger and hatred. We feel shiverings in our spirits, and a motion in our blood, at the very thought of a bitter potion we have formerly taken. Why may we not do that spiritually, which the very frame and constitution of our bodies doth naturally, upon the calling a loathsome thing to mind? The Romans' sins were transient, but the shame was renewed every time they reflected on them: Rom. vi. 21, "Whereof ye are now ashamed." They reacted the detestation instead of the pleasure: so should the revivings of old sins in our memories be entertained with our sighs, rather than with joy. We should also manage the opportunity, so as to promote some further degrees of our conversion: "*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" There is not the most hellish motion, but we may strike some sparks from it, to kindle our love to God, renew our repentance, raise our thankfulness, or quicken our obedience.—*Stephen Charnock.*

*Verse* 59.—"*And turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" Mentioning this passage, Philip Henry observed, that the great turn to be made in heart and life is, from all other things to the word of God. Conversion turns us to the word of God, as our touch-stone, to examine ourselves, our state, our ways, spirits, doctrines, worships, customs; as our glass, to dress by, James I.; as our rule to walk and work by, Galatians vi. 16; as our water, to wash us, Psalm cxix. 9; as our fire to warm us, Luke xxiv.; as our food to nourish us, Job xxiii. 12; as our sword to fight with, Ephesians vi.; as our counsellor, in all our doubts, Ps. cxix. 24; as our cordial, to comfort us; as our heritage, to enrich us.

*Verse* 59.—"*And turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" No itinerary to the heavenly city is simpler or fuller than the ready answer made by an English prelate to a scoffer who asked him the way to heaven; "First turn to the right, and keep straight on."—*Neale and Littledale.*

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*Verse* 59.—"*And turned.*" Turn to God, and he will turn to you; then you are happy, though all the world turn against you.—*John Mason.*

*Verse* 60.—"*I made haste, and delayed not,*" etc. Duty discovered should instantly be discharged. There is peril attending every step which is taken in the indulgence of any known sin, or in the neglect of any acknowledged obligation. A tender conscience will not trifle with its convictions, lest the heart should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. It is unsafe, it is unreasonable, it is highly criminal to hesitate to carry that reformation into effect which conscience dictates. He who delays when duty calls may never have it in his power to evince the sincerity of his contrition for past folly and neglect. "*I made haste,*" said the Psalmist, "*and delayed not to keep thy commandments*"; that is, being fully convinced of the necessity and excellency of obedience, I instantly resolved upon it, and immediately put it into execution.—*John Morison.*

*Verse* 60.—"*I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*" We often hear the saying, "Second thoughts are best." This does not hold in the religious life. In the context the Psalmist says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies," that is, I did not wait to think again. In religion it may be a deadly habit to take time to reflect. Make haste.—*Henry Melvill.*

*Verse* 60.—"*I made haste, and delayed not.*" When anyone is lawfully called either to the study of theology, or to the teaching it in the church, he ought not to hesitate, as Moses, or turn away, as Jonah; but, leaving all things, he should obey God who calls him; as David says, "*I made haste, and delayed not.*" Matt. iv. 20; Luke ix. 62.—*Solomon Gesner.*

*Verse* 60.—"*I made haste, and delayed not.*" Sound faith is neither suspicious, nor curious; it believes what God says, without sight, without examining. For since it is impossible for God to lie (for how should truth lie?) it is fit his word be credited for itself's sake. It must not be examined with hows and whys. That which the Psalmist says of observing the law, that must the Christian say of receiving the gospel. לֹא הִתְמַהְמָהְתִּי, "*I disputed not,*" saith David; I argued not *with God.* The word is very elegant in the original tongue, derived in the Hebrew from the pronoun מָה, which signifieth *quid.* Faith reasons not with God, asketh no *quids*, no *quares*, no *quomodos*, no whats, no hows, no wherefores: it moveth no questions. It meekly yields assent, and humbly says *Amen* to every word of God. This is the faith of which our Saviour wondered in the centurion's story.—*Richard Clerke*, —1634.

*Verse* 60.—"*I made haste, and delayed not.*" The original word, which we translate "*delayed not,*" is amazingly emphatical. ולא התמהמהתי, *velo hithmah-mahti*, I did not stand *what-what-whating;* or, as we used to express the same sentiment, *shilly-shallying* with myself: I was *determined*, and so set out. The Hebrew word as well as the English, strongly marks indecision of mind, positive action being suspended, because the mind is so unfixed as not to be able to make a choice.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 60.—Take heed of delays and procrastination, of putting it off from day to day, by saying there will be time enough hereafter; it will be time enough for me to look after heaven when I have got enough of the world; if I do it in the last year of my life, in the last month of the last year, in the last week of the last month, it will serve. O take heed of delays; this putting off repentance hath ruined thousands of souls; shun that pit into which many have fallen, shun that rock upon which many have suffered shipwreck; say with David, "*I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*"—*James Nalton*, 1664.

*Verse* 60.—"*I made haste, and delayed not,*" etc. In the verse immediately preceding, the man of God speaks of repentance as the fruit of consideration and self-examining: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto

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thy testimonies." But when did he turn? for, though we see the evil of our ways, we are naturally slow to get it redressed. Therefore David did not only turn to God, but he did it speedily: we have an account of that in this verse, "*I made haste*," etc. This readiness in the work of obedience is doubly expressed; affirmatively, and negatively. Affirmatively, "*I made haste*"; negatively, "*I delayed not.*" This double expression increaseth the sense according to the manner of the Hebrews; as, "I shall not die, but live" (Ps. cxviii. 17); that is, surely live; so here, "*I made haste, and delayed not;*" that is, I verily delayed not a moment; as soon as he had thought of his ways, and taken up the resolution to walk closely with God, he did put it into practice. The Septuagint read the words thus, "I was ready, and was not troubled or diverted by fear of danger." Indeed, besides our natural slowness to good, this is one usual ground of delays; we distract ourselves with fears; and, when God hath made known his will to us in many duties, we think of tarrying till the times are more quiet, and favourable to our practice, or till our affairs are in a better posture. A good improvement may be made of that translation; but the words run better, as they run more generally, with us, "*I made haste, and delayed not,*" etc.

David *delayed not.* When we dare not flatly deny, then we delay. *Non vacat*, that is the sinner's plea, "I am not at leisure"; but, *Non placet*, there is the reality. They which were invited to the wedding varnished their denial over with an excuse (Matt. xxii. 5). Delay is a denial; for, if they were willing, there would be no excuse. To be rid of importunate and troublesome creditors, we promise them payment another time: though we know our estate will be more wasted by that time, it is but to put them off: so this delay and putting off of God is but a shift. Here is the misery, God always comes unseasonably to a carnal heart. It was the devils that said, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matt. viii. 29). Good things are a torment to a carnal heart; and they always come out of time. Certainly, that is the best time when the word is pressed upon thy heart with evidence, light, and power, and when God treats with thee about thine eternal peace.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 60.—"*Delayed.*" *Hithmahmah;* the word used of Lot's lingering, in Genesis xix. 16.—*William Kay.*

*Verse* 60.—Delay in the Lord's errands is next to disobedience, and generally springs out of it, or issues in it. "God commanded me to make haste" (2 Chron. xxxv. 21). Let us see to it that we can say, "*I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*"—*Frances Ridley Havergal.*

*Verse* 60.—Avoid all delay in the performance of this great work of believing in Christ. Until we have performed it we continue under the power of sin and Satan, and under the wrath of God; and there is nothing between hell and us besides the breath of our nostrils. It is dangerous for Lot to linger in Sodom, lest fire and brimstone come down from heaven upon him. The manslayer must fly with all haste to the city of refuge, lest the avenger of blood pursue him, while his heart is hot, and slay him. We should make haste, and not delay to keep God's commandments.—*Walter Marshall.*

*Verse* 60.—If convictions begin to work, instantly yield to their influence. If any worldly or sinful desire is touched, let this be the moment for its crucifixion. If any affection is kindled towards the Saviour, give immediate expression to its voice. If any grace is reviving, let it be called forth into instant duty. This is the best, the only, expedient to fix and detain the motion of the Spirit now striving in the heart; and who knoweth but the improvement of the present advantage, may be the moment of victory over difficulties hitherto found insuperable, and may open our path to heaven with less interruption and more steady progress?—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 61.—"*The bands of the wicked have robbed me.*" Two readings

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remain, either of which may be admitted: *The cords of the wicked have caught hold of me*, or, *The companies of the wicked have robbed me.* Whether we adopt the one or the other of these readings, what the prophet intends to declare is, that when Satan assailed the principles of piety in his soul, by grievous temptations, he continued with undeviating steadfastness in the love and practice of God's law. *Cords* may, however, be understood in two ways; either, first, as denoting the deceptive allurements by which the wicked endeavoured to get him entangled in their society; or, secondly, the frauds which they practised to effect his ruin.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 61.—"*The bands of the wicked have robbed me.*" Some have it, "Cords of wicked men have entwined me." Others, "Snares of wicked men surround me." The meaning is that wicked men by their plots and contrivances had beset him, as men would ensnare a wild beast in their toils. They might, indeed, hem him round about in the wilderness, but they could not enthral the free mind; he would still feel at liberty in spirit, he would not forget God's law.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 61.—"*The bands of the wicked have robbed me.*" They set upon his goods, and spoiled him of them, either by plunder in the time of war, or by fines and confiscations under colour of law. Saul (it is likely) seized his effects; Absalom his palace; the Amalekites rifled Ziklag.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 61.—The friendship of the wicked must be shunned. First, because it binds us, as they are bound together—"*bands of the wicked.*" Every sinner is a gladiator with net and sword, going down into the arena, and endeavouring to enmesh any one who comes near him. A second reason for shunning the friendship of the wicked, which may be taken from the Hebrew word, is their cruelty and barbarity: for not only do the wicked bind their friends, but they make a spoil and a prey of them: "*have robbed me.*" They are decoying thieves, journeying with an unwary traveller, until they have led him into thick and dark woods, where they strip him of heavenly riches.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse* 61.—"*The bands of the wicked have robbed me.*" Then said *Christian* to his fellow, Now I call to remembrance that which was told me of a thing that happened to a good man hereabout. The name of the man was *Little-Faith*, but a good man, and he dwelt in the town of *Sincere*. The thing was this; at the entering in of this passage there comes down from *Broad-way-gate* a lane called *Dead-man's-lane;* so called because of the murders that are commonly done there. And this *Little-Faith* going on pilgrimage, as we do now, chanced to sit down there and slept. Now there happened, at that time, to come down that lane from *Broad-way-gate* three sturdy rogues, and their names were *Faint-heart*, *Mistrust*, and *Guilt*, (three brothers,) and they espying *Little-Faith* where he was came galloping up with speed. Now the good man was just awaked from his sleep, and was getting up to go on his journey. So they came all up to him, and with threatening language bid him *stand*. At this, *Little-Faith* looked as white as a clout, and had neither power to *fight* nor *flie*. Then said *Faint-heart*, Deliver thy purse; but he making no haste to do it, (for he was loth to lose his money,) *Mistrust* ran up to him, and thrusting his hand into his pocket, pulled out thence a bag of silver. Then he cried out, Thieves! Thieves! With that *Guilt*, with a great club that was in his hand, struck *Little-Faith* on the head, and with that blow felled him flat to the ground, where he lay bleeding as one that would bleed to death. . . . The place where his jewels were they never ransacked, so those he kept still; but, as I was told, the good man was much afflicted for his loss. For the thieves got most of his spending money. That which they got not (as I said) were jewels, also he had a little odd money left, but scarce enough to bring him to his journey's end; nay, (if I was not misinformed,) he was forced to beg as he went, to keep himself alive (for his jewels he might not sell). But beg, and do what

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he could be went (as we say) with many a hungry belly, the most part of the rest of the way.—*John Bunyan.*

*Verse* 61.—"*Bands.*" Howsoever, to strengthen themselves in an evil course, the wicked go together by bands and companies, yet shall it not avail them, nor hurt us. Babel's builders; Moab, Ammon, Edom, conspiring in one, may tell us, "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not escape unpunished." The wicked are like thorns before the fire; their multitude may well embolden the flame, but cannot resist it.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 61.—It is a salutary reflection to bear in mind, that thousands of spiritual adversaries are ever watching to make us their prey.—*John Morison.*

*Verse* 62.—"*At midnight I will rise to give thanks.*" Though we cannot enforce the particular observance upon you, yet there are many notable lessons to be drawn from David's practice.

1. The ardency of his devotion, or his earnest desire to praise God: "*at midnight,*" when sleep doth most invade men's eyes, then he would rise up. His heart was so set upon the praising of God, and the sense of his righteous providence did so affect him, and urge and excite him to this duty, that he would not only employ himself in this work in the daytime, and so show his love to God, but he would rise out of his bed to worship God and celebrate his praise. That which hindereth the sleep of ordinary men, is either the cares of this world, the impatient resentment of injuries, or the sting of an evil conscience: these keep others waking, but David was awaked by a desire to praise God. No hour is unseasonable to a gracious heart: he is expressing his affection to God when others take their rest. Thus we read of our Lord Christ, that he spent whole nights in prayer (Luke vi. 12). It is said of the glorified saints in heaven, that they praise God continually: "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" (Rev. vii. 15). Now, holy men, though much hindered by their bodily necessities, will come as near to continual praise as present frailty will permit. Alas, we oftentimes begin the day with some fervency of prayer and praise, but we faint ere the evening comes.

2. His sincerity, seen in his secrecy. David would profess his faith in God when he had no witness by him; "*at midnight,*" when there was no hazard of ostentation. It was a secret cheerfulness and delighting in God: when alone he could have no respect to the applause of men, but only to approve himself to God who seeth in secret. See Christ's direction: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. vi. 6). Note also Christ's own practice: "Rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark i. 35): before day he went into a desert to pray; both time and place implied secrecy.

3. We learn hence the preciousness of time: it was so to David; see how he spendeth the time of his life. We read of David, when he lay down at night, he watered his couch with his tears, after the examination of his heart (Psalm vi. 6); at midnight he rose to give thanks; in the morning he prevented the morning watches; and seven times a-day he praised God: morning, noon, and night he consecrated. These are all acts of eminent piety. We should not content ourselves with so much grace as will merely serve to save us. Alas! we have much idle time hanging upon our hands: if we would give that to God, it were well.

4. The value of godly exercises above our natural refreshings. The word is sweeter than appointed food: "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job xxiii. 12). David preferreth the praises of God before his sleep and rest in the night. Surely, this should shame us for our sensuality. We can dispense with other things for our vain pleasures:

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we have done as much for sin, for vain sports, etc.; and shall we not deny ourselves for God?

5. The great reverence to be used in secret adoration. David did not only raise up his spirits to praise God, but rise up out of his bed, to bow the knee to him. Secret duties should be performed with solemnity, not slubbered over. Praise, a special act of adoration, requireth the worship of body and soul.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 62.—"*At midnight I will rise to give thanks.*" He had praised God in the courts of the Lord's house, and yet he will do it in his bed-chamber. Public worship will not excuse us from secret worship.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 62.—"*At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee.*" Was he not ready also to praise God at midday? Certainly; but he says "*at midnight,*" that he may express the ardour and longing of his soul. We are wont to assure our friends of our good will by saying that we will rise at midnight to consult about their affairs.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse* 62.—"*At midnight I will rise to give thanks,*" etc. In these words observe three things:—1. David's holy employment, or the duty promised, giving thanks to God. 2. His earnestness and fervency implied in the time mentioned, "At midnight I will rise"; he would rather interrupt his sleep and rest, than God should want his praise. 3. The cause or matter of his thanksgiving, "because of thy righteous judgments": whereby he meaneth the dispensations of God's providence in delivering the godly and punishing the wicked, according to his word.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 62.—"*At midnight I will rise to give thanks.*" Cares of this world, impatience of wrongs, a bad conscience, keep awake the ungodly and disturb their sleep (*Rivetus*); but what I awake for is to give thanks to thee. —*A. R. Faussett.*

*Verse* 63.—"*I am a companion,*" etc. He said in the first verse of this section that God was his portion; now he saith, that all the saints of God are his companions. These two go together—the love of God and the love of his saints. He that loveth not his brother, made in God's image, whom he seeth, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen? Seeing our goodness extends not to the Lord; if it be showed to his saints and excellent ones upon earth, for his sake, it shall be no small argument of our loving affection towards himself.

Godly David, when Jonathan was dead, made diligent inquisition, Is there none of Jonathan's posterity to whom I may show kindness for Jonathan's sake? and at length he found a silly, lame Mephibosheth. So if we enquire diligently, Is there none upon earth to whom I may show kindness for Christ's sake who is in heaven? we shall ever find some, to whom whatsoever we do shall be accepted as done to himself.

His great modesty is to be marked. He saith not, I am companion of all that follow thee, but of all that fear thee. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. He places himself among novices in humility, though he excelled ancients in piety.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 63.—"*I am a companion of all them that fear thee.*" How weak is human nature! Verily there are times when the presence of one so great as the Almighty becomes oppressive, and we feel our need of one like ourselves to sympathize with us. . . . And there have been provided for us by the way many kind, sympathizing friends, like Jesus. As we pass on, we get the human supports which the Lord hath provided. We get them for fellowship too.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 63.—"*I am a companion of all them that fear thee.*" Birds of a feather will flock together. Servants of the same Lord, if faithful, will join with their fellows, and not with the servants of his enemy. When a man comes to an inn you may give a notable guess for what place he is bound

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by the company he enquires after. His question,—"Do you know of any travelling towards London? I should be heartily glad of their company," will speak his mind and his course. If he hear of any bound for another coast he regards them not; but if he know of any honest passengers that are to ride in the same road, and set out for the same city with himself, he sends to them, and begs the favour of their good company. This world is an inn, all men are in some sense pilgrims and strangers, they have no abiding-place here. Now the company they enquire after, and delight in, whether those that walk in the "broad way" of the flesh, or those who walk in the "narrow way" of the Spirit, will declare whether they are going towards heaven or towards hell. A wicked man will not desire the company of them who walk in a contrary way, nor a saint delight in their society who go cross to his journey. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" The young partridges hatched under a hen go for a time along with her chickens, and keep them company, scraping in the earth together; but when they are grown up, and their wings fit for the purpose, they mount up into the air, and seek for birds of their own nature. A Christian, before his conversion, is brought up under the prince of darkness, and walks in company with his cursed crew, according to the course of this world; but when the Spirit changes his disposition, he quickly changes his companions, and delights only in the saints that are on earth.—*George Swinnock.*

*Verse* 63.—"*I am a companion of all them that fear thee.*" 1. The person speaking. The disparity of the persons is to be observed. David, who was a great prophet, yea, a king, yet saith, "*I am a companion of all them that fear thee.*" Christ himself called them his "fellows": "Thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Ps. xlv. 7); and therefore David might well say, "*I am a companion.*"

2. The persons spoken of. David saith of "*all them that fear thee.*" The universal particle is to be observed; not only some, but "*all*": when any lighted upon him, or he upon any of them, they were welcome to him. How well would it be for the world, if the great potentates of the earth would thus think, speak, and do, "*I am a companion of all them that fear thee.*" Self-love reigneth in most men: we love the rich and despise the poor, and so have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons (James ii. 1): therefore this universality is to be regarded. Hearing of your faith and love to all the saints (Eph. i. 15), to the mean as well as the greatest. Meanness doth not take away church relations (1 Cor. xi. 20). There are many differences in worldly respects between one Christian and another; yea, in spiritual gifts, some weaker, some stronger; but we must love all; for all are children of one Father, all owned by Christ: "He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. ii. 11).

This, I say, is observable, the disparity of the persons: on the one side, David, on the other, all the people of God.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 63.—"*I am a companion,*" etc.: as if he would say, This is a sign to me that I belong to thy family; because "*I am the companion of all those fearing thee*" with a filial fear, and keeping "*thy precepts.*"—*Paulus Palanterius.*

*Verse* 63.—"*A companion*" properly is such an one as I do choose to walk and converse with ordinarily in a way of friendship; so that company keeping doth imply three things; first, it is a matter of choice, and therefore relations, as such, are not properly said to be our companions; secondly, it implies a constant walking and converse with another, and so it is expressed, Job xxxiv. 8; Prov. xiii. 20. And, thirdly, this ordinary converse or walking with another, must be in a way of friendship.—*William Bridge,* 1600—1670.

*Verse* 63.—Shun the company that shuns God, and keep the company that God keeps. Look on the society of the carnal or profane as infectious, but reckon serious, praying persons the excellent ones of the earth. Such will serve to quicken you when dead, and warm you when cold. Make the

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liveliest of God's people your greatest intimates, and see that their love and likeness to Christ be the great motive of your love to them, more than their love or likeness to you.—*John Willison*, 1680—1750.

*Verse* 64.—"*The earth, O* LORD, *is full of thy mercy.*" The humble and devoted servant of God does not look with a jaundiced eye upon that scene through which he is passing to his eternal home. Amidst many sorrows and privations, the necessary fruits of sin, he beholds all nature and providence shining forth in the rich expression of God's paternal benignity and mercy to the children of men.—*John Morison.*

*Verse* 64.—"*The earth, O* LORD, *is full of thy mercy.*" The molten sea, the shewbread, the sweet incense, the smoke of the sacrifices, Aaron's breastplate, the preaching of the cross, the keys of the kingdom of heaven: do not all these proclaim mercy? Who could enter a sanctuary, search conscience, look up to heaven, pray or sacrifice, call upon God, or think of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God, if there were no mercy? Do not all visions, covenants, promises, messages, mysteries, legal purifications, evangelical pacifications, confirm this? Yes, mercy is in the air which we breathe, the daily light which shines upon us, the gracious rain of God's inheritance; it is the public spring for all the thirsty, the common hospital for all the needy; all the streets of the church are paved with these stones. What would become of the children if there were not these breasts of consolation? How should the bride, the Lamb's wife, be trimmed, if her bridegroom did not deck her with these habiliments? How should Eden appear like the Garden of God, if it were not watered by these rivers? It is mercy that takes us out of the womb, feeds us in the days of our pilgrimage, furnishes us with spiritual provisions, closes our eyes in peace, and translates us to a secure resting-place. It is the first petitioner's suit, and the first believer's article, the contemplation of Enoch, the confidence of Abraham, the burden of the Prophetic Songs, the glory of all the apostles, the plea of the penitent, the ecstacies of the reconciled, the believer's hosannah, the angel's hallelujah. Ordinances, oracles, altars, pulpits, the gates of the grave, and the gates of heaven, do all depend upon mercy. It is the load-star of the wandering, the ransom of the captive, the antidote of the tempted, the prophet of the living, and the effectual comfort of the dying:—there would not be one regenerate saint upon earth, nor one glorified saint in heaven, if it were not for mercy.—*From G. S. Bowes's "Illustrative Gatherings,"* 1869.

*Verse* 64.—"*The earth, O* LORD, *is full of thy mercy.*"

"Why bursts such melody from tree and bush,
The overflowing of each songster's heart,
So filling mine that it can scarcely hush
Awhile to listen, but would take its part?
'Tis but one song I hear where'er I rove,
Though countless be the notes, that God is Love.

"Why leaps the streamlet down the mountain-side?
Hasting so swiftly to the vale beneath,
To cheer the shepherd's thirsty flock, or glide
Where the hot sun has left a faded wreath,
Or, rippling, aid the music of a grove?
Its own glad voice replies, that God is Love!

"Is it a fallen world on which I gaze?
Am I as deeply fallen as the rest,
Yet joys partaking, past my utmost praise,
Instead of wandering forlorn, unblest?
It is as if an unseen spirit strove
To grave upon my heart, that God is Love!"

*Thomas Davis*, 1864.



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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 65 TO 72.

THOU hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.

66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

67 Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

68 Thou *art* good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.

69 The proud have forged a lie against me: *but* I will keep thy precepts with *my* whole heart.

70 Their heart is as fat as grease; *but* I delight in thy law.

71 *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

72 The law of thy mouth *is* better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

In this ninth section the verses all begin with the letter Teth. They are the witness of experience, testifying to the goodness of God, the graciousness of his dealings, and the preciousness of his word. Especially the Psalmist proclaims the excellent uses of adversity, and the goodness of God in afflicting him. The sixty-fifth verse is the text of the entire octave.

65. "*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O* LORD, *according unto thy word.*" This is the summary of his life, and assuredly it is the sum of ours. The Psalmist tells the Lord the verdict of his heart; he cannot be silent, he must speak his gratitude in the presence of Jehovah, his God. From the universal goodness of God in nature, in verse 64, it is an easy and pleasant step to a confession of the Lord's uniform goodness to ourselves personally. It is something that God has *dealt* at all with such insignificant and undeserving beings as we are, and it is far more that he has dealt *well* with us, and so well, so wondrously well. He hath done all things well: the rule has no exception. In providence and in grace, in giving prosperity and sending adversity, in everything Jehovah hath dealt well with us. It is dealing well on our part to tell the Lord that we feel that he hath dealt well with us; for praise of this kind is specially fitting and comely. This kindness of the Lord is, however, no chance matter: he promised to do so, and he has done it according to his word. It is very precious to see the word of the Lord fulfilled in our happy experience; it endears the Scripture to us, and makes us love the Lord of the Scripture. The book of providence tallies with the book of promise: what we read in the page of inspiration we meet with again in the leaves of our life-story. We may not have thought that it would be so, but our unbelief is repented of now that we see the mercy of the Lord to us, and his faithfulness to his word; henceforth we are bound to display a firmer faith both in God and in his promise. He has spoken well, and he has dealt well. He is the best of Masters; for it is to a very unworthy and incapable *servant* that he has acted thus blessedly: does not this cause us to delight in his service more and more? We cannot say that we have dealt well with our Master; for when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; but as for our Lord, he has given us light work, large maintenance, loving encouragement, and liberal wages. It is a wonder that he has not long ago discharged us, or at least reduced our allowances, or handled us roughly; yet we have had no hard dealings, all has been ordered with as much consideration as if we had rendered perfect obedience. We have had bread enough and to spare, our livery has been duly supplied, and his service has ennobled us and made us happy as kings.

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Complaints we have none. We lose ourselves in adoring thanksgiving, and find ourselves again in careful thanks-living.

66. "*Teach me good judgment and knowledge.*" Again he begs for teaching, as in verse 64, and again he uses God's mercy as an argument. Since God had dealt well with him, he is encouraged to pray for judgment to appreciate the Lord's goodness. Good judgment is the form of goodness which the godly man most needs and most desires, and it is one which the Lord is most ready to bestow. David felt that he had frequently failed in judgment in the matter of the Lord's dealings with him: from want of knowledge he had misjudged the chastening hand of the heavenly Father, and therefore he now asks to be better instructed, since he perceives the injustice which he had done to the Lord by his hasty conclusions. He means to say —Lord, thou didst deal well with me when I thought thee hard and stern, be pleased to give me more wit, that I may not a second time think so ill of my Lord. A sight of our errors and a sense of our ignorance should make us teachable. We are not able to judge, for our knowledge is so sadly inaccurate and imperfect; if the Lord teaches us knowledge we shall attain to good judgment, but not otherwise. The Holy Ghost alone can fill us with light, and set the understanding upon a proper balance: let us ardently long for his teachings, since it is most desirable that we should be no longer mere children in knowledge and understanding.

"*For I have believed thy commandments.*" His heart was right, and therefore he hoped his head would be made right. He had faith, and therefore he hoped to receive wisdom. His mind had been settled in the conviction that the precepts of the word were from the Lord, and were therefore just, wise, kind, and profitable; he believed in holiness, and as that belief is no mean work of grace upon the soul, he looked for yet further operations of divine grace. He who believes the commands is the man to know and understand the doctrines and the promises. If in looking back upon our mistakes and ignorances we can yet see that we heartily loved the precepts of the divine will, we have good reason to hope that we are Christ's disciples, and that he will teach us and make us men of good judgment and sound knowledge. A man who has learned discernment by experience, and has thus become a man of sound judgment, is a valuable member of a church, and the means of much edification to others. Let all who would be greatly useful offer the prayer of this verse: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge."

67. "*Before I was afflicted I went astray.*" Partly, perhaps, through the absence of trial. Often our trials act as a thorn hedge to keep us in the good pasture, but our prosperity is a gap through which we go astray. If any of us remember a time in which we had no trouble, we also probably recollect that then grace was low, and temptation was strong. It may be that some believer cries, "O that it were with me as in those summer days before I was afflicted." Such a sigh is most unwise, and arises from a carnal love of ease: the spiritual man who prizes growth in grace will bless God that those dangerous days are over, and that if the weather be more stormy it is also more healthy. It is well when the mind is open and candid, as in this instance: perhaps David would never have known and confessed his own strayings if he had not smarted under the rod. Let us join in his humble acknowledgments, for doubtless we have imitated him in his strayings. Why is it that a little ease works in us so much disease? Can we never rest without rusting? Never be filled without waxing fat? Never rise as to one world without going down as to another! What weak creatures we are to be unable to bear a little pleasure! What base hearts are those which turn the abundance of God's goodness into an occasion for sin.

"*But now have I kept thy word.*" Grace is in that heart which profits by its chastening. It is of no use to plough barren soil. When there is no spiritual life affliction works no spiritual benefit; but where the heart is

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sound trouble awakens conscience, wandering is confessed, the soul becomes again obedient to the command, and continues to be so. Whipping will not turn a rebel into a child; but to the true child a touch of the rod is a sure corrective. In the Psalmist's case the medicine of affliction worked a change —"*but*"; an immediate change—"*now*"; a lasting change—"*have I*"; an inward change—"*have I kept*"; a change Godward—"*thy word.*" Before his trouble he wandered, but after it he kept within the hedge of the word, and found good pasture for his soul the trial tethered him to his proper place; it kept him, and then he kept God's word. Sweet are the uses of adversity, and this is one of them, it puts a bridle upon transgression and furnishes a spur for holiness.

68. "*Thou art good, and doest good.*" Even in affliction God is good, and does good. This is the confession of experience. God is essential goodness in himself, and in every attribute of his nature he is good in the fullest sense of the term; indeed, he has a monopoly of goodness, for there is none good but one, that is God. His acts are according to his nature: from a pure source flow pure streams. God is not latent and inactive goodness; he displays himself by his doings, he is actively beneficent, he does good. How much good he does no tongue can tell! How good he is no heart can conceive! It is well to worship the Lord as the poet here does by describing him. Facts about God are the best praise of God. All the glory we can give to God is to reflect his own glory upon himself. We can say no more good of God than God is and does. We believe in his goodness, and so honour him by our faith; we admire that goodness, and so glorify him by our love; we declare that goodness, and so magnify him by our testimony.

"*Teach me thy statutes.*" The same prayer as before, backed with the same argument. He prays, "Lord be good, and do good to me that I may both be good and do good through thy teaching." The man of God was a learner, and delighted to learn: he ascribed this to the goodness of the Lord, and hoped that for the same reason he would be allowed to remain in the school and learn on till he could perfectly practise every lesson. His chosen class-book was the royal statutes, he wanted no other. He knew the sad result of breaking those statutes, and by a painful experience he had been led back to the way of righteousness; and therefore he begged as the greatest possible instance of the divine goodness that he might be taught a perfect knowledge of the law, and a complete conformity to it. He who mourns that he has not kept the word longs to be taught it, and he who rejoices that by grace he has been taught to keep it is not less anxious for the like instruction to be continued to him.

In verse 12, which is the fourth verse of Beth, we have much the same sense as in this fourth verse of Teth.

69. "*The proud have forged a lie against me.*" They first derided him (51), then defrauded him (61), and now they have defamed him. To injure his character they resorted to falsehood, for they could find nothing against him if they spoke the truth. They forged a lie as a blacksmith beats out a weapon of iron, or they counterfeited the truth as men forge false coin. The original may suggest a common expression—"They have patched up a lie against me." They were not too proud to lie. Pride is a lie, and when a proud man utters lies "he speaketh of his own." Proud men are usually the bitterest opponents of the righteous: they are envious of their good fame and are eager to ruin it. Slander is a cheap and handy weapon if the object is the destruction of a gracious reputation; and when many proud ones conspire to concoct, exaggerate, and spread abroad a malicious falsehood, they generally succeed in wounding their victim, and it is no fault of theirs if they do not kill him outright. O the venom which lies under the tongue of a liar! Many a happy life has been embittered by it, and many a good repute has been poisoned as with the deadliest drug. It is painful to the last degree to hear unscrupulous men hammering away at

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the devil's anvil forging a new calumny; the only help against it is the sweet promise, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

"*But I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.*" My one anxiety shall be to mind my own business and stick to the commandments of the Lord. If the mud which is thrown at us does not blind our eyes or bruise our integrity it will do us little harm. If we keep the precepts, the precepts will keep us in the day of contumely and slander. David renews his resolve —"*I will keep*"; he takes a new look at the commands, and sees them to be really the Lord's—"*thy precepts*"; and he arouses his entire nature to the work—"*with my whole heart.*" When slanders drive us to more resolute and careful obedience they work our lasting good; falsehood hurled against us may be made to promote our fidelity to the truth, and the malice of men may increase our love to God. If we try to answer lies by our words we may be beaten in the battle; but a holy life is an unanswerable refutation of all calumnies. Spite is balked if we persevere in holiness despite all opposition.

70. "*Their heart is as fat as grease.*" They delight in fatness, but I delight in thee. Their hearts, through sensual indulgence, have grown insensible, coarse, and grovelling; but thou hast saved me from such a fate through thy chastening hand. Proud men grow fat through carnal luxuries, and this makes them prouder still. They riot in their prosperity, and fill their hearts therewith till they become insensible, effeminate, and self-indulgent. A greasy heart is something horrible; it is a fatness which makes a man fatuous, a fatty degeneration of the heart which leads to feebleness and death. The fat in such men is killing the life in them. Dryden wrote,

> "O souls! In whom no heavenly fire is found,
> Fat minds and ever grovelling on the ground."

In this condition men have no heart except for luxury, their very being seems to swim and stew in the fat of cookery and banqueting. Living on the fat of the land, their nature is subdued to that which they have fed upon; the muscle of their nature has gone to softness and grease.

"*But I delight in thy law.*" How much better is it to joy in the law of the Lord than to joy in sensual indulgences! This makes the heart healthy, and keeps the mind lowly. No one who loves holiness has the slightest cause to envy the prosperity of the worldling. Delight in the law elevates and ennobles, while carnal pleasure clogs the intellect and degrades the affections. There is and always ought to be a vivid contrast between the believer and the sensualist, and that contrast is as much seen in the affections of the heart as in the actions of the life: *their* heart is as fat as grease, and our heart is delighted with the law of the Lord. Our delights are a better test of our character than anything else: as a man's heart is, so is the man. David oiled the wheels of life with his delight in God's law, and not with the fat of sensuality. He had his relishes and dainties, his festivals and delights, and all these he found in doing the will of the Lord his God. When law becomes delight, obedience is bliss. Holiness in the heart causes the soul to eat the fat of the land. To have the law for our delight will breed in our hearts the very opposite of the effects of pride; deadness, sensuality, and obstinacy will be cured, and we shall become teachable, sensitive, and spiritual. How careful should we be to live under the influence of the divine law that we fall not under the law of sin and death.

71. "*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*" Even though the affliction came from bad men, it was overruled for good ends; though it was bad as it came from them, it was good for David. It benefited him in many ways, and he knew it. Whatever he may have thought while under the

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trial, he perceived himself to be the better for it when it was over. It was not good to the proud to be prosperous, for their hearts grew sensual and insensible; but affliction was good for the Psalmist. Our worst is better for us than the sinner's best. It is bad for sinners to rejoice, and good for saints to sorrow. A thousand benefits have come to us through our pains and griefs, and among the rest is this—that we have thus been schooled in the law. "*That I might learn thy statutes.*" These we have come to know and to keep by feeling the smart of the rod. We prayed the Lord to teach us (66), and now we see how he has already been doing it. Truly he has dealt well with us, for he has dealt wisely with us. We have been kept from the ignorance of the greasy-hearted by our trials, and this, if there were nothing else, is just cause for constant gratitude. To be larded by prosperity is not good for the proud; but for the truth to be learned by adversity is good for the humble. Very little is to be learned without affliction. If we would be scholars we must be sufferers. As the Latins say, *Experientia docet*, experience teaches. There is no royal road to learning the royal statutes; God's commands are best read by eyes wet with tears.

72. "*The law of thy mouth.*" A sweetly expressive name for the word of God. It comes from God's own mouth with freshness and power to our souls. Things written are as dried herbs; but speech has a liveliness and dew about it. We do well to look upon the word of the Lord as though it were newly spoken into our ear; for in very truth it is not decayed by years, but is as forcible and sure as though newly uttered. Precepts are prized when it is seen that they come forth from the lips of our Father who is in heaven. The same lips which spoke us into existence have spoken the law by which we are to govern that existence. Whence could a law so sweetly proceed as from the mouth of our covenant God? Well may we prize beyond all price that which comes from such a source.

"*Is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.*" If a poor man had said this, the world's witlings would have hinted that the grapes are sour, and that men who have no wealth are the first to despise it; but this is the verdict of a man who owned his thousands, and could judge by actual experience of the value of money and the value of truth. He speaks of great riches, he heaps it up by thousands, he mentions the varieties of its forms, —"gold and silver"; and then he sets the word of God before it all, as better *to him*, even if others did not think it better to them. Wealth is good in some respects, but obedience is better in all respects. It is well to keep the treasures of this life; but far more commendable to keep the law of the Lord. The law is better than gold and silver, for these may be stolen from us, but not the word; these take to themselves wings, but the word of God remains; these are useless in the hour of death, but then it is that the promise is most dear. Instructed Christians recognize the value of the Lord's word, and warmly express it, not only in their testimony to their fellow-men, but in their devotions to God. It is a sure sign of a heart which has learned God's statutes when it prizes them above all earthly possessions; and it is an equally certain mark of grace when the precepts of Scripture are as precious as its promises. The Lord cause us thus to prize the law of his mouth.

See how this portion of the psalm is flavoured with goodness. God's dealings are good (65), holy judgment is good (66), affliction is good (67), God is good (68), and here the law is not only good, but better than the best of treasure. Lord, make us good, through thy good word. Amen.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 65 TO 72.

TETH.—In the original each stanza begins with T, and in our own version it is so in all but verses 67 and 70, which can easily be made to do so by reading, "Till I was afflicted," and "'Tis good for me that I have been afflicted."—*C. H. S.*

*Verse* 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O* LORD."

1. The party dealing is God himself: all good is to be referred to God as the author of it.

2. The benefit received is generally expressed, "*Thou hast dealt well.*" Some translate it out of the Hebrew, *Bonum fecisti*, thou hast done good with thy servant; the Septuagint, Χρηστότητα ἐποίησας μετα του δουλου σου, thou hast made goodness to or with thy servant; out of them, the Vulgate, *Bonitatem fecisti.* Some take this clause generally, "Whatever thou dost for thy servants is good": they count it so, though it be never so contrary to the interest of the flesh: sickness is good, loss of friends is good; and so are poverty and loss of goods, to an humble and thankful mind. But surely David speaketh here of some supply and deliverance wherein God had made good some promise to him. The Jewish rabbies understand it of his return to the kingdom; but most Christian writers understand it of some spiritual benefit; that good which God had done to him. If anything may be collected from the subsequent verses, it was certainly some spiritual good. The Septuagint repeat χρηστότητα twice in this and the following verse, as if he acknowledged the benefit of that good judgment and knowledge of which there he beggeth an increase. It was in part given him already, and that learned by afflictions, as we see, in the third verse of this portion: "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." His prayer is—Now, then, go on to increase this work, this goodness which thou hast shown to thy servant.

3. The object, "*thy servant*": it is an honourable, comfortable style; David delighted in it. God is a bountiful and a gracious master, ready to do good to his servants, rewarding them with grace here, and crowning that grace with glory hereafter: "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. xi. 6).—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well.*" If the children of God did but know what was best for them, they would perceive that God did that which was best for them.—*John Mason.*

*Verse* 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant.*" He knew that God's gifts are without repentance, and that he is not weary of well-doing, but will finish the thing he hath begun; and therefore he pleads past favours. Nothing is more forcible to obtain mercy than to lay God's former mercies before him. Here are two grounds. First. If he dealt well with him when he was not regenerate, how much more will he now? and Secondly, all the gifts of God shall be perfectly finished, therefore he will go on to deal well with his servant. Here is a difference between faith and an accusing conscience: the accusing conscience is afraid to ask more, because it hath abused the former mercies: but faith, assuring us that all God's benefits are tokens of his love bestowed on us according to his word, is bold to ask for more.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant.*" "No doubt," said the late Rev. J. Brown, of Haddington, Scotland, "I have met with trials as well as others; yet so kind has God been to me, that I think if he were to give me as many years as I have already lived in the world, I should not desire one single circumstance in my lot changed, except that I wish I had less sin. It might be written on my coffin, 'Here lies one of the cares of Providence, who early wanted both father and mother, and yet never missed them.'"—*Arvine's Anecdotes.*

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*Verse* 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O* LORD, *according unto thy word.*" The expression, "*according to thy word,*" is so often repeated in this psalm, that we are apt to overlook it, or to give it only the general meaning of "because of thy promise." But in reality it implies much more. Had God dealt "*well*" with David according to man's idea? If so, what mean such expressions as these—"O forsake me not utterly," (ver. 8)—"I am a stranger in the earth," (ver. 19)—"My soul cleaveth unto the dust," (ver. 25)—"My soul melteth for heaviness," (ver. 28)—"Turn away my reproach which I fear," (ver. 39)—"The proud have had me greatly in derision," (ver. 51)—"Horror hath taken hold upon me" (ver. 53)?

In view of such passages as these, can it be said that God "dealt *well*" with David, according to man's idea? David's experience was one of very great and very varied trial. There is not a phase of our feelings in sorrow which does not find ample expression in his psalms. And yet he says, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, *according to thy word.*"

How, then, are we to interpret the expression, so often repeated here, in accordance with the facts of David's spiritual life?

God dealt well with him "according to his word," in the sense of dealing with him *according to what his word explained was the true good*—not delivering him from all trial, but sending him such trial as he specially required. He felt truly that God had dealt *well* with him when he could say (ver. 67), "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Again, (ver. 71), "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." Such dealing was hard for flesh and blood to bear, but it was indeed "*well,*" in the sense of accomplishing most blessed results.

It was "according to his word" too, in the sense of being *in accordance with his revealed manner of dealing with his people,* who are chastened for their profit.

Again, God had "dealt well" with David *according to his word or covenant;* the present fulfilment (even if in itself bitter) being a sure earnest of his final perfecting of his work, and glorifying himself in the entire fulfilment of his word, in the completed salvation of his servant.

According to thy word, O Lord, thou hast dealt well with thy servant. Thy word is the light and lamp that shows things in their true aspect, and teaches us to know that all things work together for good to thy people; that thou doest all things well. "Open thou mine eyes, O Lord, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law." What can be more wonderful than such views to our eyes?

"According to thy word": not only "because of thy promise," but in such a manner and measure as thy word declares. See how such an understanding of the expression opens out the idea of "Be merciful to me according to thy word" (ver. 58). All the sweet promises and declarations of God's infinite mercy rise before us, and make it a vast request. Again, "Quicken thou me," and "strengthen thou me according to thy word"—*up to the full measure of what thou hast promised and provided for thy people.* See the fulness in this view, of ver. 76, "Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, *according to thy word.*" Again, ver. 169, "Give me understanding *according to thy word*"; ver. 170, "Deliver me *according to thy word.*" In each of these we are led to feel that the request includes the thought of all that the word teaches on the subject.

Let our prayer then for mercy, and strength, and comfort, and understanding, and deliverance, ever be a prayer for these, in the full measure in which they are revealed and promised in the word of God.—*Mary B. M. Duncan* (1825—1865), *in* "*Under the Shadow.*"

*Verse* 66.—"*Teach me good judgment,*" etc. David, who discovered a holy taste, (Ps. xix. 10; civ. 34; cxix. 103;) and recommended it to others (xxxiv. 8), requests in our text to have it increased. For the word rendered

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"*judgment*," properly signifies *taste*, and denotes that relish for divine truth, and for the divine goodness and holiness, which is peculiar to true saints. I propose therefore to consider the nature and objects of that spiritual taste which is possessed by every gracious soul, and which all true saints desire to possess in a still greater degree.

The original word, which is often applied to those objects of sense which are distinguished by the palate, is here used in a metaphorical sense, as the corresponding term frequently is in our own language. "Doth not the ear try words, and the mouth taste meat?" (Job xii. 11). Our translators in this place render it, "*judgment*," which is nearly the same thing; yet as the terms are applied among us, there is a difference between them. Taste is that which enables a man to form a more compendious judgment. Judgment is slower in its operations than taste; it forms its decisions in a more circuitous way. So we apply the term *taste* to many objects of mental decision, to the beauty of a poem, to excellence of style, to elegance of dress or of deportment, to painting, to music, etc., in which a good taste will lead those who possess it, to decide speedily, and yet accurately, on the beauty, excellence, and propriety of the objects with which it has long been conversant without laborious examination.

Just so, true saints have a power of receiving pleasure from the beauty of holiness, which shines forth resplendently in the word of God, in the divine character, in the law, in the gospel, in the cross of Christ, in the example of Christ, and in the conduct of all his true followers, so far as they are conformed to his lovely image. I do not mean by this that they are influenced by a blind instinct, for which they can assign no sufficient reason: the genuine feelings of a true Christian can all of them be justified by the soundest reason: but those feelings which were first produced by renewing grace, are so strengthened by daily communion with God, and by frequent contemplation of spiritual things, that they acquire a delicacy and readiness of perception, which no one can possess who has never tasted how gracious the Lord is. You cannot touch, as it were, a certain string, but the renewed heart must needs answer to it. Whatever truly tends to exalt God, to bring the soul near to him, and to insure his being glorified and enjoyed, will naturally attract the notice, excite the affections, and influence the conduct of one who is born of God. "Sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb." "My meditation of thee shall be sweet." "How sweet are thy words to my taste! sweeter than honey to my mouth." "O taste and see that the Lord is good."—*John Ryland*, 1753—1825.

*Verse* 66.—"*Teach me good judgment and knowledge*," etc. Literally it may be rendered thus,—Teach me goodness, discernment and knowledge; for I have believed or confided in thy commandments. In our system of divine things, we might be inclined to place knowledge and discernment first, as begetting the "goodness." But it is a well ascertained fact, that the intellectual and moral powers are reciprocal—that the moral also give strength to the intellectual. Moreover, it is only the spiritual man that discerns the things of God. The state of being spiritually minded, and also conversant with divine things, gives a vigour and breadth to the intellect itself, that remarkably appears in the lives of eminent men. And if you remark that some have been eminent who were devoid of spiritual qualities, the reply might be—How much more eminent would they have been had they possessed these qualities. The petition is, "*Teach me goodness, discernment, and knowledge.*" The principle of pleasing God may be within, and yet the mind may require to be enlightened in all duty; and again, though all duty be known, we may require spiritual discernment to see and feel it aright.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 66.—"*Teach me good judgment.*" In a lecture of Sir John Lubbock's [on the fertilization of flowers by the agency of insects], a striking distinction is noted in regard to this operation between beautiful and hideous plants.

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Bees, it would appear, delight in pleasant odours and bright colours, and invariably choose those plants which give pleasure to man. If we watch the course of these insects on their visit to a garden, we shall observe them settling upon the rose, the lavender, and all other similar agreeable flowers of brilliant hues or sweet scent. In marked contrast with this is the conduct of flies, which always show a preference for livid yellow or dingy red plants, and those which possess an unpleasant smell. The bee is a creature of fine and sensitive tastes. The fly is "a species of insectoid vulture," naturally turning to such vegetable food as resembles carrion. Let two plates be placed on a lawn, at a little distance apart, the one containing that ill-scented underground fungus, the Stink-horn, and the other a handful of moss roses, and this difference will be immediately discerned. The foul-odoured and unsightly fungus will soon be covered with flies, while the bees will resort to the plate of roses. To this love of bees for fine colours and fragrant perfumes we are indebted for our choicest flowers. For by taking the pollen dust of some conspicuous flower to the stigma of another, they have by this union produced the seed of a still richer variety. Thus, age after age, many blossoms have been growing increasingly beautiful. On the other hand, strange to say, through a similar process, a progress in the opposite direction has taken place in those plants which are frequented by flies, and their unwholesome and repulsive qualities have become intensified.

So is it with the two great classes into which mankind may be divided—the men of this world, and the men of the next. While the purified affections of the one centre continually on "whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report," so the earthward and vile affections of the other fasten on corruption. Not more surely does the laborious bee fly from one beautiful flower to another, than does the Christian seek of set purpose all that is fairest, sweetest, and best on earth. His prayer is that of David, in Psalm cxix. 66, "*Teach me good taste*" (which is the literal translation); and "if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," he thinks on these things.—*James Neil, in "Rays from the Realms of Nature,"* 1879.

*Verse* 66.—"*Good judgment and knowledge.*" No blessings are more suitable than "*good judgment and knowledge*"—"*knowledge*" of ourselves, of our Saviour, of the way of obedience—and "*good judgment*" to direct and apply this knowledge to some valuable end. These two parts of our intellectual furniture have a most important connexion and dependence upon each other. "*Knowledge*" is the speculative perception of general truth. "*Judgment*" is the practical application of it to the heart and conduct.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 66.—"*For I have believed thy commandments.*" These words deserve a little consideration, because believing is here joined to an unusual object. Had it been, "for I have believed thy promises," or, "obeyed thy commandments," the sense of the clause had been more obvious to every vulgar apprehension. To believe commandments, sounds as harsh to a common ear, as to see with the ear, and hear with the eye; but, for all this, the commandments are the object; and of them he saith, not, "I have obeyed"; but, "*I have believed.*"

To take off the seeming asperity of the phrase, some interpreters conceive that "*commandments*" is put for the word in general; and so promises are included, yea, they think, principally intended, especially those promises which encouraged him to look to God for necessary things, such as good judgment and knowledge are. But this interpretation would divert us from the weight and force of these significant words. Therefore let us note,—

1. Certainly there is a faith in the commandments, as well as in the promises. We must believe that God is their author, and that they are the expressions of his commanding and legislative will, which we are bound to obey. Faith must discern the sovereignty and goodness of the law-maker and

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believe that his commands are holy, just, and good; it must also teach us that God loves those who keep his law and is angry with those who transgress, and that he will see to it that his law is vindicated at the last great day.

2. Faith in the commandments is as necessary as faith in the promises; for, as the promises are not esteemed, embraced, and improved, unless they are believed to be of God, so neither are the precepts: they do not sway the conscience, nor incline the affections, except as they are believed to be divine.

3. Faith in the commands must be as lively as faith in the promises. As the promises are not believed with a lively faith, unless they draw off the heart from carnal vanities to seek that happiness which they offer to us; so the precepts are not believed rightly, unless we be fully resolved to acquiesce in them as the only rule to guide us in obtaining that happiness, and unless we are determined to adhere to them, and obey them. As the king's laws are not kept as soon as they are believed to be the king's laws, unless also, upon the consideration of his authority and power, we subject ourselves to them; so this believing noteth a ready alacrity to hear God's voice and obey it, and to govern our hearts and actions according to his counsel and direction in the word.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 66.—"*For I have believed thy commandments.*" The commandments of God are not alone; but they have promises of grace on the right hand, and threatenings of wrath on the left: upon both of these faith exercises itself, and without such faith no one will be able to render obedience to God's commands.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse* 67.—"*Before I was afflicted I went astray,*" etc. Not that he wilfully, wickedly, maliciously, and through contempt, departed from his God; this he denies (Ps. xviii. 21); but through the weakness of the flesh, the prevalence of corruption, and the force of temptation, and very much through a careless, heedless, and negligent frame of spirit, he got out of the right way, and wandered from it before he was well aware. The word is used of erring through ignorance (Lev. v. 18). This was in his time of prosperity, when, though he might not, like Jeshurun, wax fat and kick, and forsake and lightly esteem the Rock of his salvation; or fall into temptations and hurtful lusts, and err from the faith, and be pierced with many sorrows; yet he might become inattentive to the duties of religion, and be negligent of them, which is a common case.—*John Gill.*

*Verse* 67.—"*Before I was afflicted.*" The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, "Before I was humbled." The Hebrew word has the general sense of being afflicted, and may refer to any kind of trial.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 67.—"*Before I was afflicted.*" Prosperity is a more refined and severe test of character than adversity, as one hour of summer sunshine produces greater corruption than the longest winter day.—*Eliza Cook.*

*Verse* 67.—"*I was afflicted.*" God in wisdom deals with us as some great person would do with a disobedient son, that forsakes his house, and riots among his tenants. His father gives orders that they should treat him ill, affront, and chase him from them, and all, that he might bring him back. The same doth God: man is his wild and debauched son; he flies from the commands of his father, and cannot endure to live under his strict and severe government. He resorts to the pleasures of the world, and revels and riots among the creatures. But God resolves to recover him, and therefore commands every creature to handle him roughly. "Burn him, fire; toss him, tempests, and shipwreck his estate; forsake him, friends; designs, fail him; children, be rebellious to him, as he is to me; let his supports and dependencies sink under him, his riches melt away, leave him poor, and despised, and destitute." These are all God's servants, and must obey his will. And to what end is all this, but that, seeing himself forsaken of all, he may at length, like the beggared prodigal, return to his father?—*Ezekiel Hopkins*, 1633—1690.

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*Verse* 67.—"*I was afflicted.*" As men clip the feathers of fowls, when they begin to fly too high or too far; even so doth God diminish our riches, etc., that we should not pass our bounds, and glory too much of such gifts. —*Otho Wermullerus.*

*Verse* 67.—"*But now have I kept thy word.*"

*Affliction brings Man Home.*

"Man like a silly sheep doth often stray,
Not knowing of his way,
Blind deserts and the wilderness of sin
He daily travels in;
There's nothing will reduce him sooner than
Afflictions to his pen.
He wanders in the sunshine, but in rain
And stormy weather hastens home again.

"Thou, the great Shepherd of my soul, O keep
Me, my unworthy sheep
From gadding: or if fair means will not do it,
Let foul, then, bring me to it.
Rather then I should perish in my error,
Lord bring me back with terror;
Better I be chastised with thy rod
And Shepherd's staff, than stray from thee, my God.

"Though for the present stripes do grieve me sore,
At last they profit more,
And make me to observe thy word, which I
Neglected formerly;
Let me come home rather by weeping cross
Than still be at a loss.
For health I'd rather take a bitter pill,
Than eating sweet-meats to be always ill."

*Thomas Washbourne*, 1606—1687.

*Verse* 67.—From the countless throng before the throne of God and the Lamb, we may yet hear the words of the Psalmist, "*Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.*" There is many an one who will say, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth" (Job v. 17). One would tell you that his worldly undoing was the making of his heavenly prospects; and another that the loss of all things was the gain of All in All. There are multitudes whom God has afflicted with natural blindness that they might gain spiritual sight; and those who under bodily infirmities and diseases of divers sorts have pined and wasted away this earthly life, gladly laying hold on glory, honour, and immortality instead.—*William Garrett Lewis, in* "*Westbourne Grove Sermons*," 1872.

*Verse* 67.—By affliction God separates the sin which he hates from the soul which he loves.—*John Mason.*

*Verse* 68.—"*Thou art good, and doest good.*" There is a good God set before us, that we may not take up with any low pattern of goodness. He is represented to us as all goodness. He is good in his nature; and his work is agreeable to his nature; nothing is wanting to it, or defective in it. Nothing can be added to it to make it better. Philo saith, "Ὁ ὄντως ὢν το πρῶτον αγαθόν": the first being must needs be the first good. As soon as we conceive that there is a God, we presently conceive that he is good, He is good of himself, good in himself, goodness itself, and both the fountain and the pattern of all the good that is in the creatures.

1. As to his NATURE, he is originally "*good*," good in himself, and good to others; as the sun hath light in himself, and giveth light to all other things. Essentially good; not only good, but goodness itself. Goodness in us is an accessory quality or superadded gift; but in God it is not a quality, but his essence. In a vessel that is gilded with gold the gilding or

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lustre is a superadded quality; but in a vessel all of gold, the lustre and the substance is the same. God is infinitely good; the creatures' good is limited, but there is nothing to limit the perfection of God, or give it any measure. He is an ocean of goodness without banks or bottom. Alas! what is our drop to this ocean! God is immutably good; his goodness can never be more or less than it is; as there can be no addition to it, so no subtraction from it. Man in his innocency was *peccabilis*, or liable to sin, afterwards *peccator*, or an actual sinner; but God ever was and is good. Now this is the pattern propounded to us, but his nature is a great deep. Therefore—

2. As to his WORK, "*he doeth good.*" What hath God been acting upon the great theatre of the world but goodness for these six thousand years? Acts xiv. 17, "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." He left not himself without a witness, ἀγαθοποιῶν, not by taking vengeance of their idolatries, but by distributing benefits. This is propounded to our imitation, that our whole life may be nothing else but doing good: Matt. v. 48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Well, therefore, doth the Psalmist say, "*Teach me thy statutes.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 68.—"*Thou art good and doest good.*" We should bless the Lord at all times, and keep up good thoughts of God, on every occasion, especially in the time of affliction. Hence we are commanded to glorify God in the fires (Isai. xxiv. 15); and this the three children did in the hottest furnace. . . . . I grant, indeed, we cannot give thanks for affliction as affliction, but either as it is the means of some good to us, or as the gracious hand of God is some way remarkable therein toward us. In this respect there is no condition on this side of hell but we have reason to praise God in it, though it be the greatest of calamities. Hence it was that David, when he speaks of his affliction, adds presently, "*Thou art good, and doest good*"; and he declares (ver. 65), "*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O* LORD, *according unto thy word.*" Hence Paul and Silas praised God when they were scourged and imprisoned.—*John Willison*, 1680—1750.

*Verse* 68.—"*Thou art good.*" The blessed effects of chastisement, as a special instance of the Lord's goodness, might naturally lead to an acknowledgment of his general goodness, in his own character, and in his unwearied dispensations of love, Judging in unbelieving haste of his providential and gracious dealings, feeble sense imagines a frown, when the eye of faith discerns a smile upon his face; and therefore in proportion as faith is exercised in the review of the past, and the experience of the present, we shall be prepared with the ascription of praise—"*Thou art good.*"—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 69.—"*The proud have forged a lie against me.*" If in the present day the enemies of the truth in their lying writings rail against the orthodox teachers in the Church, that is a very old artifice of the Devil, since David complains that in his day it happened unto him.—*Solomon Gesner.*

*Verse* 69.—"*The proud have forged a lie.*" They trim up lies with shadows of truth and neat language; they have mints to frame their lies curiously in, and presses to print their lies withal.—*William Greenhill*, 1591—1677.

*Verse* 69.—"*The proud.*" Faith humbleth, and infidelity maketh proud. Faith humbleth, because it letteth us see our sins, and the punishments thereof, and that we have no dealing with God but through the mediation of Christ; and that we can do no good, nor avoid evil, but by grace. But when men know not this, then they think much of themselves, and therefore are proud. Therefore all ignorant men, all heretics, and worldlings are proud. They that are humbled under God's hands, are humble to men; but they that despise God do also persecute his servants.—*Richard Greenham.*

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*Verse* 69.—"*Forged a lie.*" Vatablus translates it, *concinnarunt mendacia.* So Tremellius: *they have trimmed up lies.* As Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, so he can trim up his lies under coverings of truth, to make them the more plausible unto men. And indeed this is no small temptation, when lies made against the godly are trimmed up with the shadows of truth, and wicked men cover their unrighteous dealings with appearances of righteousness. Thus, not only are the godly unjustly persecuted, but simple ones are made to believe that they have most justly deserved it. In this case the godly are to sustain themselves by the testimony of a good conscience.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 69.—"*Forged*" expresses the essential meaning of the Hebrew word, but not its figurative form which seems to be that of sewing, analogous to that of weaving, as applied to the same thing, both in Hebrew and in other languages. We may also compare our figurative phrase, *to patch up*, which, however, is not so much suggestive of artifice or skill as of the want of it. The connection of the clauses is, that all the craft and malice of his enemies should only lead him to obey God, with a more undivided heart than ever.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verse* 69.—"*Forged.*" The metaphor may be like the Greek (ῥάπτειν δόλους), from sewing or patching up: or, from *smearing*, or *daubing* (Delitzsch, Moll, etc.), a wall, so as to hide the real substance. The Psalmist remains true to God despite the falsehoods with which the proud smear and hide his true fidelity.—*The Speaker's Commentary.*

*Verse* 69.—"*A lie.*" Satan's two arms by which he wrestles against the godly are violence and lies: where he cannot, or dare not, use violence, there be sure he will not fail to fight with lies. And herein doth the Lord greatly show his careful providence, in fencing his children against Satan's malice and the proud brags of his instruments, in such sort, that their proudest hearts are forced to forge lies; their malice being so great that they must do evil; and yet their power so bridled that they cannot do what they would.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 69.—"*I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.*" Let the word of the Lord come, let it come; and if we had six hundred necks, we would submit them all to his dictates.—*Augustine.*

*Verse* 70.—"*Their heart is as fat as grease.*" The word טָפַשׁ occurs nowhere else in Scripture, but with the Chaldees טְפַשׁ signifies *to fatten, to make fat;* also *to make stupid and doltish*, because such the fat ofttimes are . . . . For this reason the proud, who are mentioned in the preceding verse, are described by their fixed resolve in evil, because they are almost insensible; as is to be seen in pigs, who pricked through the skin with a bodkin, and that slowly, as long as the bodkin only touches the fat, do not feel the prick until it reaches to the flesh. Thus the proud, whose great prosperity is elsewhere likened to fatness, have a heart totally insusceptible, which is insensible to the severe reproofs of the Divine word, and also to its holy delights and pleasures, by reason of the affluence of carnal things; aye, more, is altogether unfitted for good impulses; just as elsewhere is to be seen with fat animals, how slow they are and unfit for work, when, on the contrary, those are agile and quick which are not hindered by this same fatness.—*Martin Geier.*

*Verse* 70.—"*Their heart is as fat as grease.*" This makes them—1. *Senseless* and secure; they are past feeling: thus the phrase is used (Isa. vi. 10): "Make the heart of the people fat." They are not sensible of the teaching of the word of God, or his rod. 2. *Sensual* and voluptuous: "Their eyes stand out with fatness" (Psa. lxxiii. 7); they roll themselves in the pleasures of sense, and take up with them as their chief good; and much good may it do them: I would not change conditions with them; "*I delight in thy law.*" —*Matthew Henry.*

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*Verse* 70.—"*Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law;*" as if he should say, My heart is a lean heart, a hungry heart, my soul loveth and rejoiceth in thy word. I have nothing else to fill it but thy word, and the comforts I have from it; but their hearts are fat hearts: fat with the world, fat with lust: they hate the word. As a full stomach loatheth meat and cannot digest it; so wicked men hate the word, it will not go down with them, it will not gratify their lusts.—*William Fenner.*

Being anxious to know the medical significance of fatty heart, I applied to an eminent gentleman who is well known as having been President of the College of Physicians. His reply shows that the language is rather figurative than literal. He kindly replied to me as follows:—

There are two forms of so-called "fatty heart." In the one there is an excessive amount of fatty tissue covering the exterior of the organ, especially about the base. This may be observed in all cases where the body of the animal is throughout over fat, as in animals fattened for slaughter. It does not necessarily interfere with the action of the heart, and may not be of much importance in a medical point of view. The second form is, however, a much more serious condition. In this, the muscular structure of the heart, on which its all-important function, as the central propelling power, depends, undergoes a degenerative change, by which the contractile fibres of the muscles are converted into a structure having none of the properties of the natural fibres, and in which are found a number of fatty, oily globules, which can be readily seen by means of the microscope. This condition, if at all extensive, renders the action of the heart feeble and irregular, and is very perilous, not infrequently causing sudden death. It is found in connection with a general unhealthy condition of system, and is evidence of general mal-nutrition. It is brought about by an indolent, luxurious mode of living, or, at all events, by neglect of bodily exercise and those hygienic rules which are essential for healthy nutrition. It cannot, however, be said to be incompatible with mental vigour, and certainly is not necessarily associated with stupidity. But the heart, in this form of disease, is literally "greasy," and may be truly described as "fat as grease." So much for physiology and pathology. May I venture on the sacred territory of biblical exegesis without risking the charge of fatuousness? Is not the Psalmist contrasting those who lead an animal, self-indulgent, vicious life, by which body and mind are incapacitated for their proper uses, and those who can *run* in the way of God's commandments, *delight* to do his will, and *meditate* on his precepts? Sloth, fatness, and stupidity, *versus* activity, firm muscles, and mental vigour. Body *versus* mind. Man become as a beast *versus* man retaining the image of God.—*Sir James Risdon Bennett*, 1881.

*Verse* 71.—"*It is good for me,*" etc. I am mended by my sickness, enriched by my poverty, and strengthened by my weakness, and with S. Bernard desire, *Irascaris mihi Domine*, O Lord, be angry with me. For if thou chidest me not, thou considerest me not; if I taste no bitterness, I have no physic; if thou correct me not, I am not thy son. Thus was it with the great-grandchild of David, Manasseh, when he was in affliction, "He besought the Lord his God": even that king's iron was more precious to him than his gold, his jail a more happy lodging than his palace, Babylon a better school than Jerusalem. What fools are we, then, to frown upon our afflictions! These, how crabbed soever, are our best friends. They are not indeed for our pleasure, they are for our profit; their issue makes them worthy of a welcome. What do we care how bitter that potion be that brings health.—*Abraham Wright.*

*Verse* 71.—"*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*" Saints are great gainers by affliction, because "godliness," which is "great gain," which is "profitable for all things," is more powerful than before. The rod of

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correction, by a miracle of grace, like that of Aaron's, buds and blossoms, and brings forth the fruits of righteousness, which are most excellent. A rare sight it is indeed to see a man coming out of a bed of languishing, or any other furnace of affliction, more like to angels in purity, more like to Christ who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; more like unto God himself, being more exactly righteous in all his ways, and more exemplarily holy in all manner of conversation.—*Nathanael Vincent*,—1697.

*Verse* 71.—"*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*" If I have no cross to bear to-day, I shall not advance heavenwards. A cross (that is anything that disturbs our peace), is the spur which stimulates, and without which we should most likely remain stationary, blinded with empty vanities, and sinking deeper into sin. A cross helps us onwards, in spite of our apathy and resistance. To lie quietly on a bed of down, may seem a very sweet existence; but pleasant ease and rest are not the lot of a Christian: if he would mount higher and higher, it must be by a rough road. Alas! for those who have no daily cross! Alas! for those who repine and fret against it!—*From "Gold Dust,"* 1880.

*Verse* 71.—"*It is good for me,*" etc. There are some things good but not pleasant, as *sorrow* and *affliction*. Sin is pleasant, but unprofitable; and sorrow is profitable, but unpleasant. As waters are purest when they are in motion, so saints are generally holiest when in affliction. Some Christians resemble those children who will learn their books no longer than while the rod is on their backs. It is well known that by the greatest affliction the Lord has sealed the sweetest instruction. Many are not bettered by the judgments they see, when they are by the judgments they have felt. The purest gold is the most pliable. That is the best blade which bends well without retaining its crooked figure.—*William Secker*, 1660.

*Verse* 71.—"*It is good for me,*" etc. Piety hath a wondrous virtue to change all things into matter of consolation and joy. No condition in effect can be evil or sad to a pious man: his very sorrows are pleasant, his infirmities are wholesome, his wants enrich him, his disgraces adorn him, his burdens ease him; his duties are privileges, his falls are the grounds of advancement, his very sins (as breeding contrition, humility, circumspection, and vigilance), do better and profit him: whereas impiety doth spoil every condition, doth corrupt and embase all good things, doth embitter all the conveniences and comforts of life.—*Isaac Barrow*, 1630—1677.

*Verse* 71.—"*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*" In Miss E. J. Whately's very interesting Life of her Father, the celebrated Archbishop of Dublin, a fact is recorded, as told by Dr. Whately, with reference to the introduction of the larch-tree into England. When the plants were first brought, the gardener, hearing that they came from the south of Europe, and taking it for granted that they would require warmth,—forgetting that they might grow near the snow-line,—put them into a hot-house. Day by day they withered, until the gardener in disgust threw them on a dung-heap outside; there they began to revive and bud, and at last grew into trees. They needed the cold.

The great Husbandman often saves his plants by throwing them out into the cold. The nipping frosts of trial and affliction are ofttimes needed, if God's larches are to grow. It is under such discipline that new thoughts and feelings appear. The heart becomes more dead to the world and self. From the night of sorrow rises the morning of joy. Winter is the harbinger of spring. From the crucifixion of the old man comes the resurrection of the new, as in nature life is the child of death.

"The night is the mother of the day,
And winter of the spring;
And ever upon old decay,
The greenest mosses spring."

*James Wareing Bardsley, in "Illustrated Texts and Texts Illustrated,"* 1876.

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*Verse* 71.—"*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*" It is a remarkable circumstance that the most brilliant colours of plants are to be seen on the highest mountains, in spots that are most exposed to the wildest weather. The brightest lichens and mosses, the loveliest gems of wild flowers, abound far up on the bleak, storm-scalped peak. One of the richest displays of organic colouring I ever beheld was near the summit of Mount Chenebettaz, a hill about 10,000 feet high, immediately above the great St. Bernard Hospice. The whole face of an extensive rock was covered with a most vivid yellow lichen, which shone in the sunshine like the golden battlement of an enchanted castle. There, in that lofty region, amid the most frowning desolation, exposed to the fiercest tempest of the sky, this lichen exhibited a glory of colour such as it never showed in the sheltered valley. I have two specimens of the same lichen before me while I write these lines, one from the great St. Bernard, and the other from the wall of a Scottish castle, deeply embosomed among sycamore trees; and the difference in point of form and colouring between them is most striking. The specimen nurtured amid the wild storms of the mountain peak is of a lovely primrose hue, and is smooth in texture and complete in outline; while the specimen nurtured amid the soft airs and the delicate showers of the lowland valley is of a dim rusty hue, and is scurfy in texture, and broken in outline. And is it not so with the Christian who is afflicted, tempest-tossed, and not comforted? Till the storms and vicissitudes of God's providence beat upon him again and again, his character appears marred and clouded by selfish and worldly influences. But trials clear away the obscurity, perfect the outlines of his disposition, and give brightness and blessings to his piety.

> "Amidst my list of blessings infinite
> Stands this the foremost, that my heart has bled;
> For *all* I bless thee, *most* for the *severe*."
>
> —*Hugh Macmillan.*

*Verse* 71.—"*That I might learn thy statutes.*" He speaks not of that learning which is gotten by hearing or reading of God's word; but of the learning which he had gotten by experience; that he had felt the truth and comfort of God's word more effectual and lively in trouble than he could do without trouble; which also made him more godly, wise, and religious when the trouble was gone.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 71.—"*That I might learn.*" "I had never known," said Martin Luther's wife, "what such and such things meant, in such and such psalms, such complaints and workings of spirit; I had never understood the practice of Christian duties, had not God brought me under some affliction." It is very true that God's rod is as the schoolmaster's pointer to the child, pointing out the letter, that he may the better take notice of it; thus he pointeth out to us many good lessons which we should never otherwise have learned.—*From John Spencer's "Things New and Old,"* 1658.

*Verse* 71.—"*That I might learn.*" As prosperity blindeth the eyes of men, even so doth adversity open them. Like as the salve that remedieth the disease of the eyes doth first bite and grieve the eyes, and maketh them to water, but yet afterward the eyesight is clearer than it was; even so trouble doth vex men wonderfully at the first, but afterwards it lighteneth the eyes of the mind, that it is afterward more reasonable, wise and circumspect. For trouble bringeth experience, and experience bringeth wisdom.—*Otho Wermullerus*, 1551.

*Verse* 71.—"*Learn thy statutes.*" The Christian has reason to thank God that things have not been accommodated to his wishes. When the mist of tears was in his eyes, he looked into the word of God and saw magnificent things. When Jonah came up from the depths of ocean, he showed that he had learned the statutes of God. One could not go too deep to get such knowledge. as he obtained. Nothing now could hinder him from going to Nineveh. It is just the same as though he had brought up from



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the deep an army of twelve legions of the most formidable troops. The word of God, grasped by faith, was all this to him, and more. He still, however, needed further affliction; for there were some statutes not yet learned. Some gourds were to wither. He was to descend into a further vale of humiliation. Even the profoundest affliction does not, perhaps, teach us everything; a mistake we sometimes make. But why should we compel God to use harsh measures with us? Why not sit at the feet of Jesus and learn quietly what we need to learn?—*George Bowen, in "Daily Meditations,"* 1873.

*Verse* 71.—"*Statutes.*" The verb from which this word is formed means to engrave or inscribe. The word means a definite, prescribed, written law. The term is applied to Joseph's law about the portion of the priests in Egypt, to the law about the passover, etc. But in this psalm it has a more internal meaning; that moral law of God which is engraven on the fleshy tables of the heart; the inmost and spiritual apprehension of his will; not so obvious as the law and the testimonies, and a matter of more direct spiritual communication than his precepts; the latter being more elaborated by the efforts of the mind itself, divinely guided indeed, but perhaps more instrumentally, and less passively, employed. They are continually spoken of as things yet to be learned, either wholly or in part, not objectively apprehended already, like God's law . . . . They are learned, not suddenly, but by experience, and through the means of trials mercifully ordained by God; lessons therefore which are deeply engraven on the heart. "Good is it for me that I have been in trouble, that I might learn thy statutes." "I have more understanding than my teachers, because thy statutes I have observed."—*John Jebb.*

*Verse* 72.—"*The law of thy mouth is better unto me,*" etc. Highly prize the Scriptures. Can he make a proficiency in any art, who doth slight and deprecate it? Prize this book of God above all other books. St. Gregory calls the Bible "the heart and soul of God." The rabbins say, that a mountain of sense hangs upon every apex and tittle of Scripture. "The law of the Lord is perfect": Ps. xix. 7. The Scripture is the library of the Holy Ghost; it is a pandect of divine knowledge, an exact model and platform of religion. The Scripture contains in it the *credenda*, "the things which we are to believe," and the *agenda*, "the things which we are to practise." It is "able to make us wise unto salvation": 2 Tim. iii. 15. The Scripture is the standard of truth, the judge of controversies; it is the pole-star to direct us to heaven: Isai. viii. 20. "The commandment is a lamp": Prov. vi. 23. The Scripture is the compass by which the rudder of our will is to be steered; it is the field in which Christ, the Pearl of price, is hid; it is a rock of diamonds; it is a sacred collyrium, or eye-salve; it mends their eyes that look upon it; it is a spiritual optic-glass in which the glory of God is resplendent; it is the panacy, or universal medicine for the soul. The leaves of Scripture are like the "leaves of the tree of life, for the healing of the nations": Rev. xxii. 2. The Scripture is both the breeder and feeder of grace. How is the convert born, but by "the word of truth"? James i. 18. How doth he grow, but by "the sincere milk of the word"? 1 Pet. ii. 2. The word written is the book out of which our evidences for heaven are fetched; it is the sea-mark which shows us the rocks of sin to avoid; it is the antidote against error and apostacy, the two-edged sword which wounds the old serpent. It is our bulwark to withstand the force of lust; like the Capitol of Rome, which was a place of strength and ammunition. The Scripture is the "tower of David," wherein the shields of our faith hang: Cant. iv. 4. "Take away the word and you deprive us of the sun," said Luther. The word written is above an angelic embassy, or voice from heaven. "This voice which came from heaven we heard. . . . We have also a more sure word": 2 Pet. i. 18, 19. O, prize the word written; prizing is the way

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to profiting. If Cæsar so valued his commentaries, that for preserving them he lost his purple robe, how should we estimate the sacred oracles of God? "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."—*Thomas Watson, in "The Morning Exercises."*

*Verse* 72.—"*The law of thy mouth is better unto me.*" The sacred Scriptures are the treasures and pleasures of a gracious soul: to David they were better than thousands of gold and silver. A mountain of transparent pearls, heaped as high as heaven, is not so rich in treasure as these; hence that good man chose these as his heritage for ever, and rejoiced in them as in all riches. A covetous miser could not take such delight in his bags, nor a young heir in a large inheritance, as holy David did in God's word.

The word *law* comes from a root that signifies to try as merchants that search and prove the wares that they buy and lay up; hence also comes the word for gems and jewels that are tried, and found right. The sound Christian is the wise merchant, seeking goodly pearls; he tries what he reads or hears by the standard or touchstone of Scripture, and having found genuine truths he lays them up to the great enriching of this supreme and sovereign faculty of the understanding.—*Oliver Heywood.*

*Verse* 72.—The word of God must be nearer to us than our friends, dearer to us than our lives, sweeter to us than our liberty, and pleasanter to us than all earthly comforts.—*John Mason.*

*Verse* 72.—One lesson, taught by sanctified affliction, is, the love of *God's word.* "This is my *comfort*, in my affliction: thy word hath quickened me." In reading a part of the one hundred and nineteenth psalm to Miss Westbrook, who died, she said, "Stop, sir, I never said so much to you before—I never could; but now I *can* say, 'The word of thy mouth, is dearer to me, than *thousands* of gold and silver.' What can gold and silver do for me *now*?"—*George Redford, in "Memoirs of the late Rev. John Cooke,"* 1828.

*Verse* 72.—"*Thousands of gold and silver.*" Worldly riches are gotten with labour, kept with care, lost with grief. They are false friends, farthest from us when we have most need of comfort; as all worldlings shall find to be true in the hour of death. For then, as Jonah's gourd was taken from him in a morning, when he had most need of it against the sun; so is it with the comfort of worldlings. It is far otherwise with the word of God; for if we will lay it up in our hearts, as Mary did, the comfort thereof shall sustain us, when all other comfort shall fail us.

This it is that makes us rich unto God, when our souls are storehouses, filled with the treasures of his word. Shall we think it poverty to be scant of gold and silver? *An ideo angelus pauper est, quia non habet jumenta*, etc.* Shall we esteem the angels poor, because they have not flocks of cattle? or that S. Peter was poor, because he had not gold nor silver to give unto the cripple? No, he had store of grace, by infinite degrees more excellent than it.

Let the riches of gold be left unto worldlings: these are not current in Canaan, not accounted of in our heavenly country. If we would be in any estimation there, let us enrich our souls with spiritual graces, which we have in abundance in the mines and treasures of the word of God.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 72.—The Scripture is an ever-overflowing fountain that cannot be drawn dry, and an inexhausted treasure that cannot be emptied. To this purpose tend those resemblances of the law made use of by David in this psalm, and no less justly applicable to the gospel; it is not only better than "*gold and silver*," which are things of value, but "*thousands*," which implieth abundance. In another verse he compares it to all riches and great spoil, both which contain in them *multiplex genus*, all sorts of valuable commodities, sheep, oxen, lands, houses, garments, goods, moneys, and the like: thus are all sorts of spiritual riches, yea, abundance of each sort, to be had

* Chrysostom.

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in the gospel. And therefore the Greek fathers compare Scripture verities to precious stones, and our Saviour to a pearl of great price. A minister, in this respect, is called a merchant of invaluable jewels; for, indeed, gospel truths are choice and excellent, as much worth as our souls, as heaven, as salvation is. Nay, should I go higher, look what worth there is in the riches of God's grace, the precious blood of Christ, that may secondarily be applied to the gospel, which discovereth and offereth both to us.—*Abraham Wright.*

*Verses* 72, 127.—When David saw how some make void the law of God, he saith, "*Therefore I love thy commandments above gold: yea, above fine gold.*" As if he had said, I love thy law all the more because I see some men esteem and reckon it as if it were dross, and throw it up as void and antiquated, or taking the boldness, as it were, to repeal and make it void, that they may set up their own lusts and vain imaginations. Because I see both profane and superstitious men thus out of love with thy law, therefore my love is more enflamed to it, "*I love it above gold,*" which leads the most of men away captives in the love of it; and I esteem it more than that which is most esteemed by men, and gains men most esteem in this world, "*fine gold*"; yea, as he said (Ps. xix. 10) "*more than much fine gold.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse* 72.—You that are gentlemen, remember what Hierom reports of Nepotianus, a young gentleman of Rome, *qui longa et assidua meditatione Scripturarum pectus suum fecerat bibliothecam Christi*, who by long and assiduous meditation of the Scriptures, made his breast the library of Christ. Remember what is said of King Alfonsus, that he read over the Bible fourteen times, together with such commentaries as those times afforded.

You that are scholars, remember Cranmer and Ridley; the former learned the New Testament by heart in his journey to Rome, the latter in Pembroke-hall walks in Cambridge. Remember what is said of Thomas à-Kempis,—that he found rest nowhere *nisi in angulo, cum libello*, but in a corner with this Book in his hand. And what is said of Beza,—that when he was above fourscore years old he could say perfectly by heart any Greek chapter in Paul's Epistles.

You that are women, consider what Hierom saith of Paula, Eustochiam, and other ladies, who were singularly versed in the Holy Scriptures.

Let all men consider that hyperbolical speech of Luther, that he would not live in Paradise without the Word; and with it he could live well enough in hell. This speech of Luther must be understood *cum grano salis.*—*Edmund Calamy.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 73 TO 80.

THY hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

74 They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments *are* right, and *that* thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law *is* my delight.

78 Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: *but* I will meditate in thy precepts.

79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

80 Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

We have now come to the tenth portion, which in each stanza begins with Jod, but it certainly does not treat of jots and tittles and other trifles. Its subject would seem to be personal experience and its attractive influence upon others. The prophet is in deep sorrow, but looks to be delivered and made a blessing. Endeavouring to teach, the Psalmist first seeks to be taught (verse 73), persuades himself that he will be well received (74), and rehearses the testimony which he intends to bear (75). He prays for more experience (76, 77), for the baffling of the proud (78), for the gathering together of the godly to him (79), and for himself again that he may be fully equipped for his witness-bearing and may be sustained in it (80). This is the anxious yet hopeful cry of one who is heavily afflicted by cruel adversaries, and therefore makes his appeal to God as his only friend.

73. "*Thy hands have made me and fashioned me.*" It is profitable to remember our creation, it is pleasant to see that the divine hand has had much to do with us, for it never moves apart from the divine thought. It excites reverence, gratitude, and affection towards God when we view him as our Maker, putting forth the careful skill and power of his hands in our forming and fashioning. He took a personal interest in us, making us with his own hands; he was doubly thoughtful, for he is represented both as making and moulding us. In both giving existence and arranging existence he manifested love and wisdom; and therefore we find reasons for praise, confidence, and expectation in our being and well-being. "*Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.*" As thou hast made me, teach me. Here is the vessel which thou hast fashioned; Lord, fill it. Thou hast given me both soul and body; grant me now thy grace that my soul may know thy will, and my body may join in the performance of it. The plea is very forcible; it is an enlargement of the cry, "Forsake not the work of thine own hands." Without understanding the divine law and rendering obedience to it we are imperfect and useless; but we may reasonably hope that the great Potter will complete his work and give the finishing touch to it by imparting to it sacred knowledge and holy practice. If God had roughly made us, and had not also elaborately fashioned us, this argument would lose much of its force; but surely from the delicate art and marvellous skill which the Lord has shown in the formation of the human body, we may infer that he is prepared to take equal pains with the soul till it shall perfectly bear his image.

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A man without a mind is an idiot, the mere mockery of a man; and a mind without grace is wicked, the sad perversion of a mind. We pray that we may not be left without a spiritual judgment: for this the Psalmist prayed in verse 66, and he here pleads for it again; there is no true knowing and keeping of the commandments without it. Fools can sin; but only those who are taught of God can be holy. We often speak of gifted men; but he has the best gifts to whom God has given a sanctified understanding wherewith to know and prize the ways of the Lord. Note well that David's prayer for understanding is not for the sake of speculative knowledge, and the gratification of his curiosity: he desires an enlightened judgment that he may learn God's commandments, and so become obedient and holy. This is the best of learning. A man may abide in the College where this science is taught all his days, and yet cry out for ability to learn more. The commandment of God is exceeding broad, and so it affords scope for the most vigorous and instructed mind: in fact, no man has by nature an understanding capable of compassing so wide a field, and hence the prayer, "give me understanding";—as much as to say—I can learn other things with the mind I have, but thy law is so pure, so perfect, spiritual and sublime, that I need to have my mind enlarged before I can become proficient in it. He appeals to his Maker to do this, as if he felt that no power short of that which made him could make him wise unto holiness. We need a new creation, and who can grant us that but the Creator himself? He who made us to live must make us to learn; he who gave us power to stand must give us grace to understand. Let us each one breathe to heaven the prayer of this verse ere we advance a step further, for we shall be lost even in these petitions unless we pray our way through them, and cry to God for understanding.

74. "*They that fear thee will be glad when they see me: because I have hoped in thy word.*" When a man of God obtains grace for himself he becomes a blessing to others, especially if that grace has made him a man of sound understanding and holy knowledge. God-fearing men are encouraged when they meet with experienced believers. A hopeful man is a God-send when things are declining or in danger. When the hopes of one believer are fulfilled his companions are cheered and established, and led to hope also. It is good for the eyes to see a man whose witness is that the Lord is true; it is one of the joys of saints to hold converse with their more advanced brethren. The fear of God is not a left-handed grace, as some have called it; it is quite consistent with gladness; for if even the sight of a comrade gladdens the God-fearing, how glad must they be in the presence of the Lord himself! We do not only meet to share each others' burdens, but to partake in each others' joys, and some men contribute largely to the stock of mutual gladness. Hopeful men bring gladness with them. Despondent spirits spread the infection of depression, and hence few are glad to see them, while those whose hopes are grounded upon God's word carry sunshine in their faces, and are welcomed by their fellows. There are professors whose presence scatters sadness, and the godly quietly steal out of their company: may this never be the case with us.

75. "*I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgments are right.*" He who would learn most must be thankful for what he already knows, and be willing to confess it to the glory of God. The Psalmist had been sorely tried, but he had continued to hope in God under his trial, and now he avows his conviction that he had been justly and wisely chastened. This he not only thought but knew, so that he was positive about it, and spoke without a moment's hesitation. Saints are sure about the rightness of their troubles, even when they cannot see the intent of them. It made the godly glad to hear David say this, "*And that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*" Because love required severity, therefore the Lord exercised it. It was not because God was unfaithful that the believer found himself in a sore strait, but for just

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the opposite reason: it was the faithfulness of God to his covenant which brought the chosen one under the rod. It might not be needful that others should be tried just then; but it was necessary to the Psalmist, and therefore the Lord did not withhold the blessing. Our heavenly Father is no Eli: he will not suffer his children to sin without rebuke, his love is too intense for that. The man who makes the confession of this verse is already progressing in the school of grace, and is learning the commandments. This third verse of the section corresponds to the third of Teth (67), and in a degree to several other verses which make the thirds in their octaves.

76. "*Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.*" Having confessed the righteousness of the Lord, he now appeals to his mercy, and while he does not ask that the rod may be removed, he earnestly begs for comfort under it. Righteousness and faithfulness afford us no consolation if we cannot also taste of mercy, and, blessed be God, this is promised us in the word, and therefore we may expect it. The words "merciful kindness," are a happy combination, and express exactly what we need in affliction: mercy to forgive the sin, and kindness to sustain under the sorrow. With these we can be comfortable in the cloudy and dark day, and without them we are wretched indeed; for these, therefore, let us pray unto the Lord, whom we have grieved by our sin, and let us plead the word of his grace as our sole reason for expecting his favour. Blessed be his name, notwithstanding our faults we are still his servants, and we serve a compassionate Master. Some read the last clause, "according to thy saying unto thy servant"; some special saying of the Lord was remembered and pleaded: can we not remember some such "faithful saying," and make it the groundwork of our petitioning? That phrase, "according to thy word," is a very favourite one; it shows the motive for mercy and the manner of mercy. Our prayers are according to the mind of God when they are according to the word of God.

77. "*Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live.*" He was so hard pressed that he was at death's door if God did not succour him. He needed not only mercy, but "mercies," and these must be of a very gracious and considerate kind, even "tender mercies," for he was sore with his wounds. These gentle favours must be of the Lord's giving, for nothing less would suffice; and they must "come" all the way to the sufferer's heart, for he was not able to journey after them; all he could do was to sigh out, "Oh that they would come." If deliverance did not soon come, he felt ready to expire, and yet he told us but a verse or so ago that he hoped in God's word: how true it is that hope lives on when death seems written on all besides. A heathen said, "dum spiro spero," while I breathe I hope; but the Christian can say, "dum expiro spero," even when I expire I still expect the blessing. Yet no true child of God can live without the tender mercy of the Lord; it is death to him to be under God's displeasure. Notice, again, the happy combination of the words of our English version. Was there ever a sweeter sound than this—"tender mercies"? He who has been grievously afflicted, and yet tenderly succoured is the only man who knows the meaning of such choice language.

How truly we live when tender mercy comes to us. Then we do not merely exist, but live; we are lively, full of life, vivacious, and vigorous. We know not what life is till we know God. Some are said to die by the visitation of God, but we live by it.

"*For thy law is my delight.*" O blessed faith! He is no mean believer who rejoices in the law even when its broken precepts cause him to suffer. To delight in the word when it rebukes us, is proof that we are profiting under it. Surely this is a plea which will prevail with God, however bitter our griefs may be; if we still delight in the law of the Lord he cannot let us die, he must and will cast a tender look upon us and comfort our hearts.

78. "*Let the proud be ashamed.*" He begged that the judgments of God

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might no longer fall upon himself, but upon his cruel adversaries. God will not suffer those who hope in his word to be put to shame, for he reserves that reward for haughty spirits: they shall yet be overtaken with confusion, and become the subjects of contempt, while God's afflicted ones shall again lift up their heads. Shame is for the proud, for it is a shameful thing to be proud. Shame is not for the holy, for there is nothing in holiness to be ashamed of.

"*For they dealt perversely with me without a cause.*" Their malice was wanton, he had not provoked them. Falsehood was employed to forge an accusation against him; they had to bend his actions out of their true shape before they could assail his character. Evidently the psalmist keenly felt the malice of his foes. His consciousness of innocence with regard to them created a burning sense of injustice, and he appealed to the righteous Lord to take his part and clothe his false accusers with shame. Probably he mentioned them as "the proud," because he knew that the Lord always takes vengeance on proud men, and vindicates the cause of those whom they oppress. Sometimes he mentions the proud, and sometimes the wicked, but he always means the same persons; the words are interchangeable: he who is proud is sure to be wicked, and proud persecutors are the worst of wicked men.

"*But I will meditate in thy precepts.*" He would leave the proud in God's hands, and give himself up to holy studies and contemplations. To obey the divine precepts we have need to know them, and think much of them, hence this persecuted saint felt that meditation must be his chief employment. He would study the law of God and not the law of retaliation. The proud are not worth a thought. The worst injury they can do us is to take us away from our devotions; let us baffle them by keeping all the closer to our God when they are most malicious in their onslaughts.

In a similar position to this we have met with the proud in other octaves, and shall meet them yet again. They are evidently a great plague to the Psalmist, but he rises above them.

79. "*Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.*" Perhaps the tongue of slander had alienated some of the godly, and probably the actual faults of David had grieved many more. He begs God to turn to him, and then to turn his people towards him. Those who are right with God are also anxious to be right with his children. David craved the love and sympathy of gracious men of all grades,—of those who were beginners in grace, and of those who were mature in piety—"those that fear thee," and "those that have known thy testimonies." We cannot afford to lose the love of the least of the saints, and if we have lost their esteem we may most properly pray to have it restored. David was the leader of the godly party in the nation, and it wounded him to the heart when he perceived that those who feared God were not as glad to see him as aforetime they had been. He did not bluster and say that if they could do without *him*, he could very well do without *them;* but he so deeply felt the value of their sympathy, that he made it a matter of prayer that the Lord would turn their hearts to him again. Those who are dear to God, and are instructed in his word, should be very precious in our eyes, and we should do our utmost to be upon good terms with them.

David has two descriptions for the saints, they are God-fearing and God-knowing. They possess both devotion and instruction; they have both the spirit and the science of true religion. We know some believers who are gracious, but not intelligent; and, on the other hand, we also know certain professors who have all head and no heart: he is the man who combines devotion with intelligence. We neither care for devout dunces nor for intellectual icebergs. When fearing, and knowing walk hand in hand they cause men to be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. If these are my choice companions I may hope that I am one of

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their order. Let such persons ever turn to me because they find in me congenial company.

80. "*Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.*" This is even more important than to be held in esteem by good men. This is the root of the matter. If the heart be sound in obedience to God, all is well, or will be well. If right at heart we are right in the main. If we be not sound before God, our name for piety is an empty sound. Mere profession will fail, and undeserved esteem will disappear like a bubble when it bursts; only sincerity and truth will endure in the evil day. He who is right at heart has no reason for shame, and he never shall have any; hypocrites ought to be ashamed now, and they shall one day be put to shame without end; their hearts are rotten, and their names shall rot. This eightieth verse is a variation of the prayer of the seventy-third verse; there he sought sound understanding, here he goes deeper, and begs for a sound heart. Those who have learned their own frailty by sad experience, are led to dive beneath the surface, and cry to the Lord for truth in the inward parts. In closing the consideration of these eight verses, let us join with the writer in the prayer, "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes."

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## NOTES ON VERSES 73 TO 80.

In this section each verse begins with the Hebrew letter *Jod*, or i, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, called in Matthew v. 18, *jot;* one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verses* 73—80.—The usual account of this section, as given by the mediæval theologians, is that it is the prayer of man to be restored to his state of original innocence and wisdom by being conformed to the image of Christ. And this squares with the obvious meaning, which is partly a petition for divine grace and partly an assertion that the example of piety and resignation in trouble is attractive enough to draw men's hearts on towards God, a truth set forth at once by the Passion, and by the lives of all those saints who have tried to follow it.—*Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 73.—"*Thy hands have made me and fashioned me,*" etc. This verse hath a petition for understanding, and a reason with it: I am the workmanship of thine hands, therefore give me understanding. There is no man but favours the works of his hands. And shall not the Lord much more love his creatures, especially man, his most excellent creature? whom, if ye consider according to the fashion of his body, ye shall find nothing on earth more precious than he; but in that which is not seen, namely, his soul, he is much more beautiful. So you see, David's reasoning is very effectual; all one as if he should say as he doth elsewhere, "Forsake not, O Lord, the work of thine hands"; thou art my author and maker; thine help I seek, and the help of none other.

No man can rightly seek good things from God, if he consider not what good the Lord hath already done to him. But many are in this point so ignorant, that they know not how wonderfully God did make them; and therefore can neither bless him, nor seek from him, as from their Creator and Conserver. But this argument, drawn from our first creation, no man can rightly use, but he who is through grace partaker of the second creation; for all the privileges of our first creation we have lost by our fall. So that now by nature it is no comfort to us, nor matter of our hope, that God did make us; but rather matter of our fear and distrust, that we have mismade ourselves, have lost his image, and are not now like unto that which God created us in the beginning.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 73.—"*Thy hands have made me and fashioned me,*" etc. Mark here two things: first, that in making his prayer for holy understanding, he justly accuseth himself and all others of blindness, which proceeded not from the Creator, but from man corrupted. Secondly, that even from his creation he conceived hope that God would continue his work begun in him, because God leaveth not his work, and therefore he beggeth God to bestow new grace upon him, and to finish that which he had begun in him.—*Thomas Wilcocks,* 1586.

*Verse* 73.—Hugo ingeniously notices in the different verbs of this verse the particular vices to be shunned: ingratitude, when it is said, "*Thy hands have made me*"; pride, "*and fashioned me*"; confidence in his own judgment, "*give me understanding*"; prying inquisitiveness, "*that I may learn thy commandments.*"

*Verse* 73.—"*Thy hands.*" Hilary and Ambrose think that by the plural "*hands*" is intimated that there is a more exact and perfect workmanship in man, and as if it were with greater labour and skill he had been formed by God, because *after the image and likeness of God:* and that it is not written that any other thing but man was made by God with both hands, for he saith in Isaiah, "Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth": Isa. xlviii. 13.*—*John Lorinus,* 1569—1634.

* This, however, is an error, as Augustine notes; for it is written, "The heavens are the work of thine hands. Ps. cii. 25.—C. H. S.

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*Verse* 73.—"*Thy hands.*" Oh, look upon the *wounds* of thine hands, and forget not the *work* of thine hands: so Queen Elizabeth prayed.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 73.—Some refer the verb עָשָׂה, "*made,*" to the soul, כּוֹנַן, "*fashioned,*" to the body.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

*Verse* 73.—"*Made me and fashioned me: give me understanding.*" The greatness of God is no hindrance to his intercourse with us, for one special part of the divine greatness is to be able to condescend to the littleness of created beings, seeing that creaturehood must, from its very nature, have this littleness; inasmuch as God must ever be God, and man must ever be man: the ocean must ever be the ocean, the drop must ever be the drop. The greatness of God compassing our littlenesses about, as the heavens the earth, and fitting into it on every side, as the air into all parts of the earth, is that which makes the intercourse so complete and blessed: "In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (Job xii. 10). Such is his nearness to, such is his intimacy with, the works of his hands.

It is nearness, not distance, that the name Creator implies; and the simple fact of his having *made* us is the assurance of his desire to bless us and to hold intercourse with us. Communication between the thing made and its maker is involved in the very idea of creation. "*Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.*" "Faithful Creator" is his name (1 Pet. iv. 19), and as such we appeal to him, "Forsake not the work of thine own hands" (Ps. cxxxviii. 8).—*Horatius Bonar, in "The Rent Veil,"* 1875.

*Verse* 73.—"*Give me understanding,*" etc. The book of God is like the apothecary's shop, there is no wound but therein is a remedy; but if a stranger come unto the apothecary's shop, though all these things be there, yet he cannot tell where they are, but the apothecary himself knoweth; so in the Scriptures, there are cures for any infirmities; there is comfort against any sorrows, and by conferring chapter with chapter, we shall understand them. The Scriptures are not wanting to us, but we to ourselves; let us be conversant in them, and we shall understand them, when great clerks who are negligent remain in darkness.—*Richard Stock.*

*Verse* 73.—"*Give me understanding.*" Let us pray unto God that he would open our understandings; that as he hath given us consciences to guide us, so also he would give eyes to these guides that they may be able to direct us aright. The truth is, it is God only that can soundly enlighten our consciences; and therefore let us pray unto him to do it. All our studying, and hearing, and reading, and conferring will never be able to do it; it is only in the power of him who made us to do it. He who made our consciences, he only can give them this heavenly light of true knowledge and right understanding; and therefore let us seek earnestly to him for it.—*William Fenner,* 1600—1640.

*Verse* 73.—"*That I may learn thy commandments.*" That he might *learn* them so as to know the sense and meaning of them, their purity and spirituality; and so as to do them from a principle of love, in faith, and to the glory of God: for it is not a bare learning of them by heart or committing them to memory, nor a mere theory of them, but the practice of them in faith and love, which is here meant.—*John Gill.*

*Verses* 73, 74.—From these verses, learn, 1. Albeit nothing can satisfy unbelief, yet true faith will make use of the most common benefit of creation to strengthen itself: "*Thine hands have made me and fashioned me.*" 2. It is a good way of reasoning with God, to ask another gift, because we have received one; and because he hath given common benefits, to ask that he would give us also saving graces: "*Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.*" 3. Seeing that God is our Creator, and that the end of our creation is to serve God, we may confidently ask whatsoever grace may enable us to serve him,

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as the Psalmist's example doth teach us. . . . 4. It should be the joy of all believers to see one of their number sustained and borne up in his sufferings; for in the proof and example of one sufferer a pawn is given to all the rest, that God will help them in like case: "*They that fear thee will be glad when they see me.*"—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 74.—"*They that fear thee will be glad,*" etc. They who "*fear God*" are naturally "*glad when they see*" and converse with one like themselves; but more especially so, when it is one whose faith and patience have carried him through troubles, and rendered him victorious over temptations; one who hath "*hoped in God's word,*" and hath not been disappointed. Every such instance affordeth fresh encouragement to all those, who, in the course of their warfare, are to undergo like troubles, and to encounter like temptations. In all our trials let us, therefore, remember, that our brethren, as well as ourselves, are deeply interested in the event, which may either strengthen or weaken the hands of the multitudes.—*George Horne.*

*Verse* 74.—"*They that fear thee will be glad when they see me,*" etc. How comfortable it is for the heirs of promise to see one another, or meet together: *aspectus boni viri delectat*, the very look of a good man is delightful: it is a pleasure to converse with those that are careful to please God, and fearful to offend him. How much affected they are with one another's mercies: "*they will be glad when they see me,*" since I have obtained an event answerable to my hope. They shall come and look upon me as a monument and spectacle of the mercy and truth of God. But what mercy had he received? The context seemeth to carry it for grace to obey God's commandments; that was the prayer immediately preceding, to be instructed and taught in God's law (ver. 73). Now they will rejoice to see my holy behaviour, how I have profited and glorified God in that behalf. The Hebrew writers render the reason, "Because then I shall be able to instruct them in those statutes, when they shall see me, their king, study the law of God." It may be expounded of any other blessing or benefit God had given according to his hope; and I rather understand it thus, they will be glad to see him sustained, supported, and borne out in his troubles and sufferings. "They will be glad when they shall see in me a notable example of the fruit of hoping in thy grace."—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 74.—"*Because I have hoped in thy word.*" And have not been disappointed. The Vulgate rendereth it *superesperavi*, I have over-hoped; and then Aben-Ezra glosseth, "*I have hoped in all thy decree*"; even that of afflicting me, as in the next verse.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 75.—"*I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgments are right.*" In very early life the tree of knowledge seemed a very fine, a glorious tree in my sight; but how many mistakes have I made upon that subject! And how many are the mistakes which yet abound upon that which we are pleased to call knowledge, in common speech. He that hath read the classics; he that hath dipped into mathematical science; he that is versed in history, and grammar, and common elocution; he that is apt and ready to solve some knotty question and versed in the ancient lore of learning, is thought to be a man of knowledge; and so he is, compared with the ignorant mass of mankind. But what is all this compared with the knowledge in my text? Knowledge of which few of the learned, as they are called, have the least acquaintance with at all.

"*I know*"—What, David? what do you know?—"I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."

Fond as I may yet be of other speculations, I would rather, much rather, possess the knowledge of this man in this text, than have the largest acquaintance with the whole circle of the sciences, as it is proudly called. . . . I am apprehensive that, in the first clause, the Psalmist speaks, in general,

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of the ordinances, appointments, providences, and judgments of God; and the assertion is, he doth know that they are right, that they are equitable, that they are wise, that they are fair, and that they are not to be found fault with; and that though men, through folly, bring themselves into distress, and then their hearts fret against God. He was blessed with superior understanding. He excepts nothing: "I know that *all* thy judgments are right." Then, in the latter part of the text, he makes the matter personal. It might be said, it is an easy thing for you so to think when you see the revolutions of kingdoms, the tottering of thrones, the distresses of some mortals, and the pains of others, that they are all right. "Yes," saith he, "but I have the same persuasion about all my own sorrows; I do know that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted *me*."—*From a Sermon by John Martin*, 1817.

*Verse* 75.—"*I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgments are right*," etc. The text is in the form of an address to God. We often find this in David, that, when he would express some deep feeling, or some point of spiritual experience, he does so in this way—addressing himself to God. Those who love God delight to hold communion with him; and there are some feelings which the spiritual mind finds peculiar comfort and pleasure in telling to God himself. "*I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgments are right.*" God orders all things, and his "*judgments*" here mean his general orderings, decisions, dealings—not afflictions only, though including them. And when the Psalmist says, "*thy judgments*," he means especially God's judgments towards *him*, God's dealings with him, and thus all that had happened to him, or should happen to him. For in the Psalmist's creed there was no such thing as chance. God ordered all that befell him, and he loved to think so. He expresses a sure and happy confidence in all that God did, and would do, with regard to him. He trusted fully in God's wisdom, God's power, God's love. "*I know thy judgments are right*"—quite right, right in every way, without one single point that might have been better, perfectly wise and good. He shows the firmest persuasion of this. "I *know*," he says, not merely, "I think." But these very words, "I *know*," clearly show that this was a matter of faith, not of sight. For he does not say, "I can *see* that thy judgments are right," but "I *know*." The meaning plainly is, "Though I cannot see all—though there are some things in thy dealings which I cannot fully understand—yet I believe, I am persuaded, and thus I *know*, O Lord, that thy judgments are right."

"*Thy judgments.*" Not some of them, but all. He takes into view all God's dealings with him, and says of them without exception, "*I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgments are right.*" When the things that happen to us are plainly for our comfort and good, as many of them are, then we thankfully receive what God thus sends to us, and own him as the Giver of all, and bless him for his gracious dealing; and this is right. But all the faith required for this (and some faith there is in it) is to own God as dealing with us, instead of thanklessly receiving the gifts with no thought of the Giver. It is a far higher degree of faith, that says of *all* God's dealings, even when seemingly not for our happiness, "*I know that thy judgments are right.*"

Yet this is the meaning here, or certainly the chief meaning. For though the word "*judgments*" does mean God's dealings of every kind, yet *here* the words that follow make it apply especially to God's afflictive dealings, that is, to those dealings of his that do not seem to be for our happiness; "*I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*" The judgments which the Psalmist chiefly had in view, and which he felt so sure were right, were not joys, but sorrows; not things bestowed, but things taken away; those blessings in disguise, those veiled mercies, those gifts clad in the garb of mourning, which God so often sends to his children. The Psalmist knew, and knew against all appearance to the

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contrary, that these judgments were "*right.*" Whatever they might be—losses, bereavements, disappointments, pain, sickness—they were right; as right as the more manifest blessings which went before them; quite right, perfectly right; so right that they could not have been better; just what were best; and all because they were God's judgments. That one thing satisfied the Psalmist's mind, and set every doubt at rest. The dealings in themselves he might have doubted, but not him whose dealings they were. "*Thy* judgments." That settled all. "*And that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*" This means that, in appointing trouble as his lot, God had dealt with him in faithfulness to his word, faithfulness to his purposes of mercy, with a faithful, not a weak love. He had sent him just what was most for his good, though not always what was most pleasing; and in this he had shown himself faithful. Gently and lovingly does the Lord deal with his children. He gives no unnecessary pain; but that which is needful he will not withhold.—*Francis Bourdillon*, 1881.

*Verse* 75.—"*Thy judgments.*" There are *judicia oris*, and there are *judicia operis;* the judgments of God's mouth, and the judgments of God's hands. Of the former there is mention at verse 13: "With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth." And by these "*judgments*" are meant nothing else but the holy law of God, and his whole written word; which everywhere in this psalm are indifferently called his "statutes," his "commandments," his "precepts," his "testimonies," his "judgments." And the laws of God are therefore, amongst other reasons, called by the name of "*judgments,*" because by them we come to have a right judgment whereby to discern between good and evil. We could not otherwise with any certainty judge what was meet for us to do, and what was needful for us to shun. *A lege tua intellexi*, at verse 104; "By thy law have I gotten understanding." St. Paul confesseth (Rom. vii.), that he had never rightly known what sin was if it had not been for the law; and he instanceth in that of lust, *which he had not known to be a sin if the law* had not said, "thou shalt not covet." And no question but these "*judgments,*" these *judicia oris*, are all "*right*" too; for it were unreasonable to think that God should make that a rule of right to us, which were itself not right. We have both the name (that of "*judgments;*") and the thing too, (that they are "*right*") in the 19th Psalm; where having highly commended the law of God, under the several appellations of the "law," testimonies, statutes and commandments, verses 7 and 8, the prophet then concludeth under this name of "judgments," verse 9: "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Besides these *judicia oris*, which are God's judgments of *direction*, there are also *judicia operis*, which are his judgments for *correction*. And these do ever include *aliquid pœnale*, something inflicted upon us by Almighty God, as it were by way of punishment; something that breedeth in us trouble or grief. The apostle saith (Heb. xii.) that every chastening is grievous; and so it is, more or less; or else it could be to us no punishment. And these, again, are of two sorts; yet not distinguished so much by the things themselves that are inflicted, as by the condition of the persons on whom they are inflicted, and especially by the affection and intention of God that inflicteth them. For all, whether public calamities that light upon whole nations, cities, or other greater or lesser societies of men (such as are pestilences, famine, war, inundations, unseasonable weather, and the like;) or private afflictions, that light upon particular families or persons, (as sickness, poverty, disgrace, injuries, death of friends, and the like;) all these, and whatsoever other of either kind, may undergo a twofold consideration; in either of which they may not unfitly be termed the judgments of God, though in different respects.

Now we see the several sorts of God's judgments: which of all these may we think is here meant? If we should take them all in, the conclusion would hold them, and hold true too. *Judicia oris*, and *judicia operis;* public

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and private judgments; those plagues wherewith in fury he punisheth his enemies, and those rods wherewith in mercy he correcteth his children: most certain it is they are all "*right.*" But yet I conceive those *judicia oris* not to be so properly meant in this place; for the exegesis in the latter part of the verse (wherein what are here called *judgments* are there expounded by *troubles*) seemeth to exclude them, and to confine the text in the proper intent thereof to these *judicia operis* only; but yet to all them of what sort soever; public or private, plagues or corrections. Of all which he pronounceth that they are "*right;*" which is the predicate of the conclusion: "*I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right.*"—*Robert Sanderson.*

*Verse* 75.—"*Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*" Mark the emphasis: he doth not barely acknowledge that God was faithful, though or notwithstanding he had afflicted him, but faithful in sending the afflictions. Affliction and trouble are not only consistent with God's love plighted in the covenant of grace; but they are parts and branches of the new-covenant administration. God is not only faithful notwithstanding afflictions, but faithful in sending them. There is a difference between these two: the one is like an exception to the rule, *quæ firmat regulam in non exceptis:* the other makes it a part of the rule, God cannot be faithful without doing all things that tend to our good and eternal welfare. The conduct of his providence is one part of the covenant engagement; as to pardon our sins, and sanctify us, and give us glory at the last, so to suit his providence as our need and profit require in the way to heaven. It is an act of his sovereign mercy which he hath promised to his people, to use such discipline as conduceth to their safety. In short, the cross is not an exception to the grace of the covenant, but a part of the grace of the covenant.

The cause of all afflictions is sin, therefore justice must be acknowledged: their end is repentance, and therefore faithfulness must be acknowledged. The end is not destruction and ruin, so afflictions would be acts of justice, as upon the wicked; but that we may be fit to receive the promises, and so they are acts of faithfulness.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 75.—"*Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*" That is, with a sincere intention of doing me good. God thoroughly knows our constitution, what is noxious to our health, and what may remedy our distempers; and therefore accordingly disposeth to us

Pro jucundis aptissima quæque *

instead of pleasant honey, he sometimes prescribes wholesome wormwood for us. We are ourselves greatly ignorant of what is conducible to our real good, and, were the choice of our condition wholly permitted to us, should make very foolish, very disadvantageous elections.

We should (be sure) all of us embrace a rich and plentiful estate; when as, God knows, that would make us slothful and luxurious, swell us with pride and haughty thoughts, encumber us with anxious cares and expose us to dangerous temptations; would render us forgetful of ourselves and neglectful of him. Therefore he wisely disposeth poverty unto us; poverty, the mother of sobriety, the nurse of industry, the mistress of wisdom; which will make us understand ourselves and our dependence on him, and force us to have recourse unto his help. And is there not reason we should be thankful for the means by which we are delivered from those desperate mischiefs, and obtain these excellent advantages?

We should all (certainly) choose the favour and applause of man: but this, God also knows, would corrupt our minds with vain conceit, would intoxicate our fancies with spurious pleasure, would tempt us to ascribe immoderately to ourselves, and sacrilegiously to deprive God of his due honour. Therefore he advisedly suffers us to incur the disgrace and displeasure, the

* Juv. Sat. x. 349.

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hatred and contempt of men: that so we may place our glory only in the hopes of his favour, and may pursue more earnestly the purer delights of a good conscience. And doth not this part of divine providence highly merit our thanks?

We would all climb into high places, not considering the precipices on which they stand, nor the vertiginousness of our own brains: but God keeps us safe in the humble valleys, allotting to us employments which we are more capable to manage.

We should perhaps insolently abuse power, were it committed to us: we should employ great parts on unwieldy projects, as many do, to the disturbance of others, and their own ruin: vast knowledge would cause us to overvalue ourselves and contemn others: enjoying continual health, we should not perceive the benefit thereof, nor be mindful of him that gave it. A suitable mediocrity therefore of these things the divine goodness allotteth unto us, that we may neither starve for want, nor surfeit with plenty.

In fine, the advantages arising from afflictions are so many, and so great, that it were easy to demonstrate that we have great reason, not only to be contented with, but to rejoice in, and to be very thankful for, all the crosses and vexations we meet with; to receive them cheerfully at God's hand, as the medicines of our soul, and the condiments of our fortune; as the arguments of his goodwill, and the instruments of virtue; as solid grounds of hope, and comfortable presages of future joy unto us.—*Isaac Barrow.*

*Verse* 75.—"*Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*" When a father disowns and banishes a child, he corrects him no more. So God may let one whom he intends to destroy go unchastened; but never one with whom he is in covenant.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 75.—"*I know, O* LORD," etc.

Yet, Lord, in memory's fondest place
I shrine those seasons sad,
When, looking up, I saw thy face
In kind austereness clad.

I would not miss one sigh or tear,
Heart-pang, or throbbing brow;
Sweet was the chastisement severe,
And sweet its memory now.

Yes! let the fragrant scars abide,
Love-tokens in thy stead,
Faint shadows of the spear-pierced side,
And thorn-encompassed Head.

And such thy tender force be still,
When self would swerve or stray,
Shaping to truth the froward will
Along thy narrow way.

—*John Henry Newman*, 1829.

*Verse* 76.—"*Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort.*" In the former verse he acknowledged that the Lord had afflicted him; now in this he prayeth the Lord to comfort him. This is strange that a man should seek comfort at the same hand that strikes him: it is the work of faith; nature will never teach us to do it. "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath spoiled, and he will heal us: he hath wounded, and he will bind us up." Again, we see that the crosses which God lays on his children, are not to confound, not to consume them; only to prepare them for greater consolations. With this David sustained himself against Shimei's cursing; "The Lord will look on my affliction, and do me good for this evil": with this our Saviour comforts his disciples; "Your mourning shall be turned into joy." As the last estate of Job was better than his first; so shall the Lord render more to his children at the last than now at the first he takes from them: let us therefore bear his cross, as a preparative to comfort.—*William Cowper.*

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*Verse* 76.—"*Let thy merciful kindness be for my comfort.*" Several of the preceding verses have spoken of affliction (verses 67, 71, 75). The Psalmist now presents his petition for alleviation under it. But of what kind? He does not ask to have it removed. He does not "beseech the Lord, that it might depart from him": 2 Cor. xii. 8. No. His repeated acknowledgments of the supports vouchsafed under it, and the benefits he had derived from it, had reconciled him to commit its measures and continuance to the Lord. All that he needs, and all that he asks for, is a sense of his "*merciful kindness*" upon his soul. Thus he submits to his justice in his accumulated trials, and expects consolation under them solely upon the ground of his free favour.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 76.—"*Let thy merciful kindness,*" etc. Let me derive my comfort and happiness from a diffusion of thy love and mercy, חסדה, *chasdecha*, thy exuberant goodness through my soul.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 76.—"*According to thy word unto thy servant.*" If his promise did not please him, why did he make it? If our reliance on the promise did not please him, why did his goodness work it? It would be inconsistent with his goodness to mock his creature, and it would be the highest mockery to publish his word, and create a temper in the heart of his supplicant suited to his promise, which he never intended to satisfy. He can as little wrong his creature as wrong himself, and therefore he can never disappoint that faith which after his own methods casts itself into the arms of his kindness, and is his own workmanship, and calls him author. That goodness which imparted itself so freely to the irrational creation will not neglect those nobler creatures that put their trust in him. This renders God a fit object for trust and confidence.—*Stephen Charnock.*

*Verse* 76.—"*According to thy word.*" David had a particular promise of a particular benefit; to wit, the kingdom of Israel. And this promise God performed unto him; but his comfort stood not in it; for Saul before him had the kingdom, but the promises of mercy belonged not to him, and therefore, when God forsook him, his kingdom could not sustain him. But David here depends upon the general promises of God's mercy made to his children; wherein he acknowledgeth a particular promise of mercy made to him. For the general promises of mercy and grace made in the gospel are by faith made particular to every believer.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 76.—"*Thy word unto thy servant.*" Here we may use the eunuch's question: "Of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other man?" Of himself questionless, under the denomination of God's servant. But then the question returneth,—Is it a word of promise made to himself in particular, or to God's servants in the general? Some say the former, the promises brought to him by Nathan. I incline to the latter, and it teacheth us these three truths:—

1st. That God's servants only are capable of the sweet effects of his mercy and the comforts of his promises. Who are God's servants? (1.) Such as own his right and are sensible of his interest in them: "God, whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts xxviii. 23). (2.) Such as give up themselves to him, renouncing all other masters. Renounce we must, for we were once under another master (Rom. vi. 17; Matt. vi. 24; Rom. vi. 13; 1 Chron. xxx. 8). (3.) Such as accordingly frame themselves to do his work sincerely: "serve with my spirit" (Rom. i. 9); and, "in newness of spirit" (Rom. vii. 6), even as becomes those who are renewed by the Spirit: diligently (Acts xxvi. 7), and universally (Luke i. 74, 75), and wait upon him for grace to do so (Heb. xii. 28). These are capable of comfort. The book of God speaketh no comfort to persons that live in sin, but to God's servants, such as do not live as if they were at their own disposal, but at God's beck. If he say go, they go. They give up themselves to be and do what God will have them to be and do.

2ndly. If we have the benefit of the promise, we must thrust in ourselves



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under one title or other among those to whom the promise is made; if not as God's children, yet as God's servants. Then the promise is as sure to us as if our name were in it.

3rdly. All God's servants have common grounds of comfort: every one of God's servants may plead with God as David doth. The comforts of the word are the common portion of God's people.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 76.—"*Thy word unto thy servant.*" Our Master has passed his word to all his servants that he will be kind to them and they may plead it with him.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 77.—"*Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live.*" If we mark narrowly we shall find that David here seeks another sort of mercy than he sought before. For first he sought mercy to forgive his sins; then he sought mercy to comfort him in his troubles; now he seeks mercy to live, and sin no more. Alas, many seek the first mercy, of remission; and the second mercy, of consolation in trouble, who are altogether careless of the third mercy, to live well. It is a great mercy of God to amend thy life: where this is not, let no man think he hath received either of the former. It is a great mercy of God, which not only pardons evil that is done, but strengthens us also to further good that we have not done; and this is the mercy which here David seeks.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 77.—"*Let thy tender mercies come unto me,*" etc. The mercies of God are "*tender mercies,*" they are the mercies of a father to his children, nay, tender as the compassion of a mother over the son of her womb. They "*come unto*" us, when we are not able to go to them. By them alone we "*live*" the life of faith, of love, of joy and gladness. And to such as "*delight*" in his law, God will grant these mercies, and this life; he will give them pardon, and, by so doing, he will give them life from the dead.—*George Horne.*

*Verse* 77.—"*Let thy tender mercies,*" etc. Taking the more literal rendering, the words express high confidence—"Thy tender mercies *shall* come unto me, and I shall live; for thy law is my delight." Had the believer nothing but his own deserts to support his plea at the throne of grace, he could never rise into this high confidence. He goes upon the foundation of the divine goodness, manifested through the anointed One, and he goes surely.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 77.—"*Come.*" Coming to him noteth a personal and effectual application. 1st. A personal application, as in the 41st verse of this psalm: "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word." David would not be forgotten, or left out or lost in the throng of mankind, when mercy was distributing the blessing to them. 2ndly. Effectual application: which signifieth, 1. The removal of obstacles and hindrances; 2. The obtaining the fruits and effects of this mercy.

First. The removing of obstacles. Till there be a way made, the mercy of God cannot come at us; for the way is barricaded and shut up by our sins: as the Lord maketh a way for his anger (Ps. lxxviii. 50), by removing the hindrances, so the Lord maketh way for his mercy, or mercy maketh way for itself, when it removeth the obstruction. Sin is the great hindrance of mercy. We ourselves raise the mists and the clouds which intercept the light of God's countenance; we build up the partition wall which separates between God and us; yet mercy finds the way.

Secondly. The obtaining the fruits of mercy . . . . It is not enough to hear somewhat of God's saving mercies; but we should beg that they may come unto us, be effectually and sensibly communicated unto us, that we may have experience of them in our own souls. A man that hath read of honey, or heard of honey, may know the sweetness of it by guess and imagination; but a man that hath tasted of honey knoweth the sweetness of it in truth:

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so, by reading and hearing of the grace and mercy of God in Christ, we may guess that it is a sweet thing; but he that hath had an experimental proof of the sweet effects and fruits of it in his own heart perceives that all which is spoken of God's pardoning and comforting of sinners is verified in himself. —*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 77.—"*Thy law is my delight.*" A child of God, though he cannot serve the Lord perfectly, yet he serves him willingly; his will is in the law of the Lord; he is not a pressed soldier, but a volunteer. By the beating of this pulse we may judge whether there be spiritual life in us or no. David professeth that God's law was his delight; he had his crown to delight in, he had his music to delight in; but the love he had to God's law did drown all other delights; as the joy of harvest and vintage exceeds the joy of gleaning. —*Thomas Watson.*

*Verse* 78.—"*Let the proud be ashamed,*" etc. Here is the just recompense of his pride. He would fain have honour and pre-eminence, but God will not give them unto him: he flies shame and contempt, but God shall pour them upon him. "*For they dealt perversely with me without a cause.*" David complains of the wicked and false dealing of his enemies against him; and his prayer is written to uphold us in the like temptation. For Satan is alway like himself, hating them whom the Lord loveth. He can scarce be worse, he can never be better; and therefore with restless malice stirs he up all his cursed instruments in whom he reigns, to persecute those who are loved and protected of the Lord. "*But I will meditate in thy precepts.*" David's enemies fought against him with the weapons of the flesh, wickedness and falsehood: he withstands them by the armour of the Spirit; not meeting wickedness with wickedness, and falsehood with falsehood. For if we fight against Satan with Satan's weapons he will soon overcome us; but if we put upon us the complete armour of God to resist him, he shall flee from us.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 78.—"*Let the proud be ashamed.*" That is, that they may not prosper or succeed in their attempts; for men are ashamed when they are disappointed. All their endeavours for the extirpation of God's people are vain and fruitless, and those things which they have subtilely devised, have not that effect which they propounded unto themselves. "*For they dealt perversely with me without a cause.*" The Septuagint have it ἀδίκως, unjustly. Ainsworth readeth, "With falsehood they have depraved me." It implieth two things: first, that they pretended a cause; but, secondly, David avoucheth his innocency to God; and so, without any guilt of his, they accused, defamed, condemned his actions, as is usual in such cases. When the proud are troublesome and injurious to God's people the saints may boldly commend their cause to God. . . . The Lord may be appealed unto upon a double account; partly, as he is an enemy to the proud, and as a friend to the humble (James iv. 6; Ps. cxxxviii. 6); partly, as he is the portion of the afflicted and oppressed (Ps. cxl. 12). When Satan stirreth up his instruments to hate those whom the Lord loveth, the Lord will stir up his power to help and defend them. Is not this a revengeful prayer?

Answer, No. 1st. Because those who pray it are seeking their own deliverance, that they may more freely serve God by consequence. Indeed, by God's showing mercy to his people, the pride of wicked ones is suppressed (verse 134); but mercy is the main object of the prayer.

2ndly. As it concerneth his enemies, he expresseth it in mild terms—that they may "*be ashamed*"; that is, disappointed, in their counsels, hopes, machinations, and endeavours. And therefore it is not against the persons of his enemies, but their plots and enterprises. In such cases shame and disappointment may even do them good. They think to bring in the total suppression of God's people, but that would harden them in their sins; therefore God's people desire that he would not let their innocency be

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trampled upon, but disappoint their adversaries, that the proud may be ashamed in the failing of their attempts.

3rdly. The prayers of the righteous for the overthrow of the wicked, are a kind of prophecies; so that, in praying, David doth in effect foretell, that such as dealt perversely should soon be ashamed, since a good cause will not always be oppressed: "But he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed" (Isai. lxvi. 5).

4thly. Saints have a liberty to imprecate vengeance, but such as must be used sparingly and with great caution: "Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul" (Ps. lxxi. 13). Malicious enemies may be expressly prayed against.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 78.—"*Let the proud be ashamed.*" This suggests a word to the wicked. Take heed that by your implacable hatred to the truth and church of God you do not engage her prayers against you. These imprecatory prayers of the saints, when shot at the right mark, and duly put up, are murdering pieces, and strike dead where they light. "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." Luke xviii. 7, 8. They are not empty words—as the imprecations of the wicked poured into the air, and there vanishing with their breath—but are received into heaven, and shall be sent back with thunder and lightning upon the pates of the wicked. David's prayer unravelled Ahithopel's fine-spun policy, and twisted his halter for him. The prayers of the saints are more to be feared—as once a great person said and felt—than an army of twenty thousand men in the field. Esther's fast hastened Haman's ruin, and Hezekiah's against Sennacherib brought his huge host to the slaughter, and fetched an angel from heaven to do the execution in one night upon them.—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse* 78.—"*The proud.*" The wicked, especially the persecutors of God's people, are usually characterized by this term in this psalm, "*the proud*" (verses 51, 69, 122). Pride puts wicked men upon being troublesome and injurious to the people of God. But why are the persecutors and the injurious called "*the proud*"? 1. Because wicked men shake off the yoke of God, and will not be subject to their Maker, and therefore desist not from troubling his people: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go"? (Exod. v. 2). What was in his tongue, is in all men's hearts; they contemn God and his laws. Every sin hath a degree of pride, and a deprecation of God included in it, (2 Sam. xii. 9). 2. Because they are drunk with worldly felicity, and never think of changes. "Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud" (Ps. cxxiii. 4). When men go on prosperously, they are apt wrongfully to trouble others, and then to flout at them in their misery, and to despise the person and cause of God's people, which is a sure effect of great arrogancy and pride. They think they may do what they please: "They have no changes; therefore they fear not God," and put forth their hands against such as be at peace with them (Ps. lv. 19, 20): whilst they go on prosperously and undisturbedly, they cannot abstain from violence and oppression. 3. Because they affect a life of pomp, and ease, and carnal greatness, and so despise the affliction, and meanness, and simplicity of God's people. The false church hath usually the advantage of worldly power and external glory; and the true church is known by the Divine power, gifts and graces, and the lustre of holiness. 4. They are called "*proud,*" because of their insolent carriage towards the Lord's people; partly in their laws and injunctions, requiring them to give them more honour, respect, and obedience, than in conscience can be afforded them; as Haman would have Mordecai to devote himself to him after the manner of the Persians (Esther iii. 5).—*Condensed from Manton.*

*Verse* 78.—"When any of you," says Cæsarius, "is singing the verse of

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the Psalm where it is said, '*Let the proud be put to shame,*' let him be earnest to avoid pride, that he may escape everlasting shame."—*William Kay.*

*Verse* 78.—"*But I will meditate in thy precepts.*" He repeateth the same thing often, and surely if the world could not contain the books that might be written of Christ, and yet for our infirmity the Lord hath comprised them in such a few books, and yet one thing in them is often repeated, it showeth that the matter is weighty, and of us duly and often to be considered. And again we are taught that this is a thing that none do so carefully look unto as they ought. And he showeth that as his enemies sought by evil means to hurt him; so he sought to keep a good conscience, that so they might not hurt him. Then we must not set policy against policy nor *cretizare cum Cretensibus;* but let us always tend to the word, and keep within the bounds of that, and fight with the weapons that it lendeth us. . . . If we would give over ourselves to God and his word, and admit nothing but that which agreeth to the word, then should we be made wiser than our enemies.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 78.—"*I will meditate in thy precepts.*" The verb שִׂיחַ, *asiach*, in the second clause of the verse, may be rendered, "*I will speak of*," as well as, "*I will meditate upon*"; implying, that, when he had obtained the victory, he would proclaim the goodness of God, which he had experienced. *To speak of God's statutes*, is equivalent to declaring out of the law how faithfully he guards his saints, how securely he delivers them, and how righteously he avenges their wrongs.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 78.—"*Meditate.*" Truths lie hid in the heart without efficacy or power, till improved by deep, serious, and pressing thoughts . . . . A sudden carrying a candle through a room, giveth us not so full a survey of the object, as when you stand a while beholding it. A steady contemplation is a great advantage.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 79.—"*Let those that fear thee turn unto me.*" Some think it intimates that when David had been guilty of that foul sin in the murder of Uriah, though he was a king, they that feared God grew strange to him, and turned from him, for they were ashamed of him; this troubled him, and therefore he prays, Lord, let them "*turn to me*" again. He desires especially the company of those that were not only honest but intelligent, "*that have known thy testimonies,*" have good heads as well as good hearts, and whose conversation will be edifying. It is desirable to have an intimacy with such.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 79.—"*Let those that fear thee turn unto me,*" etc. As he had not his own flesh to fight against only, but the world also, so he did not only himself fight, but he seeketh the help of others. When many see that religion cannot be truly professed but danger will come of it, because many set themselves against it, they flee from it, and go to the greater part, which is the wicked. If we will avoid this, let us join ourselves to God's children, and they will help us with counsel and advice; for one may be strong when we are weak, another may have counsel when we shall not know what to do; therefore by them we shall be kept from many evil things. So Paul (2 Tim. i. 16), after he had complained of the wrong that many had done unto him, he straightway giveth thanks for the family of Onesiphorus, which refreshed him more than all his enemies could discourage him; so that he durst oppose this one household to the whole rabble of the wicked.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 79.—"*Let those that fear thee,*" etc. You must go to God and beseech him to choose your company for you. Mark what David said and did; in verse 63 he saith. "*I am a companion of all them that fear the Lord*"; yet in this verse he goes to God, and prayeth, saying, "*Let those that fear thee, O Lord, turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.*" As if he should say, "Of a truth, Lord, I am a companion of all that do fear thee; but it is not in my power to bend their hearts unto me; the hearts of

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all men are in thy hands, now therefore "*let those that fear thee turn unto me.*" So do you go to God, and say likewise: Lord, do thou choose my company for me; oh, do thou bow and incline their hearts to be my companions.—*William Bridge.*

*Verse* 79.—"*Those that fear.*" "*Those that have known.*" Fear and knowledge do make up a godly man. Knowledge without fear breedeth presumption; and fear without knowledge breedeth superstition; and blind zeal, as a blind horse, may be full of mettle, but is ever and anon stumbling. Knowledge must direct fear, and fear must season knowledge; then it is a happy mixture and composition.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 79.—One great means to restore a good understanding among God's people is prayer. David goeth to God about it: "*Lord, let them turn to me.*" The Lord governeth hearts and interests, both are in his hands, and he useth their alienation or reconciliation, either for judgment or mercy. God, when he pleaseth, can divert from us the comfort of godly friends; and when he pleaseth, he can bring them back again to us. The feet of God's children are directed by God himself; if they come to us, it is a blessing of God; if not, it is for a correction. He made Jacob and Laban meet peaceably (Gen. xxx.), and in the next chapter, Jacob and Esau.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 80.—"*Let my heart be sound.*" What is a sound heart? It noteth reality and solidity in grace. The Septuagint hath it, *Let my heart be without spot and blemish.* It implieth the reality of grace, opposed to the bare form of godliness, or the fair shows of hypocrites, and the sudden and vanishing motions of temporaries.

If you would have me unfold what this sound heart is, there is required these four things:—

1. An enlightened understanding; that is, the directive part of the soul; and it is sound when it is kept free from the leaven and contagion of error: "A man of understanding walketh uprightly," Prov. xv. 21. A sound mind is a good help to a sound heart.

2. There is required an awakened conscience, that warneth us of our duty, and riseth up in dislike of sin upon all occasions: "When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee" (Prov. vi. 22): to have a constant monitor in our bosoms to put us in mind of God, when our reins preach to us in the night season (Ps. xvi. 7) · there is a secret spy in our bosoms that observes all that we do, and think, and speak; a domestic chaplain, that is always preaching to us. His heart is his Bible.

3. There is required a rightly disposed will, or a steadfast purpose to walk with God in all conditions, and to do what is good and acceptable in his sight: "He exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord," Acts xi. 23. Many have light inclinations, or wavering resolutions; but their hearts are not fixedly, habitually bent to please God; therein chiefly lieth this sound heart, that it doth inseparably cleave to God in all things.

4. There is required that the affections be purged and quickened: these are the vigorous motions of the will, and therefore this must be heedfully regarded; purged they must be from that carnality and fleshliness that cleaveth to them. This is called in Scripture the circumcision of the heart (Deut. xxx. 6).—*Condensed from Manton.*

*Verse* 80.—"*Let my heart be sound.*" "A sound mind in a sound body," was the prayer of a heathen, and his desire was according to the extent of his knowledge; but a heart sound in God's statutes, sound to the very core, with no speck, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, and like the king's daughter, "all glorious within," this is what the Psalmist prays for, this is what every child of God aims at, and prays for too,—"Even as He is pure."—*Barton Bouchier.*

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*Verse* 80.—"*Let my heart be sound.*"

True-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal,
King of our lives, by thy grace will we be!
Under thy standard, exalted and royal,
Strong in thy strength, we will battle for thee!

True-hearted, whole-hearted! Fullest allegiance
Yielding henceforth to our glorious King;
Valiant endeavour and loving obedience
Freely and joyously now would we bring.

True-hearted, Saviour, thou knowest our story;
Weak are the hearts that we lay at thy feet,
Sinful and treacherous! yet for thy glory,
Heal them, and cleanse them from sin and deceit.

Whole-hearted! Saviour, beloved and glorious,
Take thy great power, and reign thou alone,
Over our wills and affections victorious,
Freely surrendered, and wholly thine own.

Half-hearted! false-hearted! Heed we the warning!
Only the whole can be perfectly true;
Bring the whole offering, all timid thought scorning,
True-hearted only if whole-hearted too.

Half-hearted! Saviour, shall aught be withholden,
Giving thee part who has given us all?
Blessings outpouring, and promises golden
Pledging, with never reserve or recall.

Half-hearted! Master, shall any who know thee
Grudge thee their lives, who hast laid down thine own?
Nay; we would offer the hearts that we owe thee,—
Live for thy love and thy glory alone.

Sisters, dear sisters, the call is resounding,
Will ye not echo the silver refrain,
Mighty and sweet, and in gladness abounding,—
"True-hearted, whole-hearted!" ringing again?

Jesus is with us, his rest is before us,
Brightly his standard is waving above.
Brothers, dear brothers, in gathering chorus,
Peal out the watchword of courage and love!

Peal out the watchword, and silence it never,
Song of our spirits, rejoicing and free!
"True-hearted, whole-hearted, now and for ever,
King of our lives, by thy grace we will be!"

' *Frances Ridley Havergal* (1836—1879) *in* "*Loyal Responses.*"

*Verse* 80.—"*Let my heart be sound,*" etc. This is a plain difference between a sound heart and a false heart; in the receiving of Christ the sound heart receives him as a favourite receives a prince, he gives up all to him, and lets him have the command of all. A mere innkeeper entertains him that comes next to him; he will take any man's money, and will give welcome to any man; if it be the worst man that comes he cares not, for he loves gain above all things. Not so the good heart; he welcomes Christ alone, and resigns up all to Christ. Whatsoever is pleasing to Christ he will do it, and whatsoever comes from Christ he will welcome.—*Thomas Hooker* (1586—1647) *in* "*The Soules Implantation.*"

*Verse* 80.—"*Be sound.*" Heb. *Be perfect;* as the word from the same root is rendered in Job i. 1. Dr. R. Young gives as the meaning of the word as used by the Psalmist, *whole, complete, plain.*

*Verse* 80.—"*Sound in thy statutes,*" etc. Though an *orthodox creed* does not constitute true religion, yet it is the basis of it, and it is a great blessing to have it.—*Nicolson, quoted by W. S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 80.—If you would be faithful to Christ, be sincere in your profession of him, make David's prayer and desire to be yours: "*Let my heart be sound*

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*in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.*" Religion which is begun in hypocrisy will certainly end in apostacy, and this always carries with it reproach and ignominy.—*William Spurstowe* (—1666).

*Verse* 80.—"*Ashamed.*" We may be ashamed either before God or men, ourselves or others.

1. Before God: either in our addresses to him at the throne of grace, or when summoned to appear at the last day before the tribunal of his justice. (1.) If you understand it of our approach to him, we cannot come into his presence with confidence if we have not a sound heart. "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God": 1 John iii. 21. We lose that holy familiarity and cheerfulness, when we are unbosoming ourselves to our heavenly Father, when our hearts are not sound. (2.) When we are summoned to appear before the tribunal of his justice. Many, now, with a bold impudence, will obtrude themselves upon the worship of God, because they see him not, and have not a due sense of his majesty; but the time will come, when the most impudent and outbraving sinners will be astonished, even then when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open and made manifest, and hidden things brought to light (1 Cor. iv. 5); and every one is to receive his judgment from God according to what he hath done, either good or evil.

2. Before men a man may be ashamed, and so before ourselves and others. (1.) Ourselves. It was a saying of Pythagoras, Reverence thyself; be not ashamed of thyself. God hath a spy and deputy within us, and taketh notice of our conformity and unconformity to his will, and, after sin committed, lasheth the soul with the sense of its own guilt and folly, as the body is lashed with stripes: "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" Rom. vi. 21. (2.) Before others. And so our shame may be occasioned by our scandals, or our punishments; it is hard to say which is intended here.—*Condensed from Manton.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 81 TO 88.

MY soul fainteth for thy salvation: *but* I hope in thy word.

82 Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; *yet* do I not forget thy statutes.

84 How many *are* the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

85 The proud have digged pits for me, which *are* not after thy law.

86 All thy commandments *are* faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.

87 They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.

88 Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

This portion of the gigantic psalm sees the Psalmist *in extremis*. His enemies have brought him to the lowest condition of anguish and depression; yet he is faithful to the law and trustful in his God. This octave is the midnight of the psalm, and very dark and black it is. Stars, however, shine out, and the last verse gives promise of the dawn. The strain will after this become more cheerful; but meanwhile it should minister comfort to us to see so eminent a servant of God so hardly used by the ungodly: evidently in our own persecutions, no strange thing has happened unto us.

81. "*My soul fainteth for thy salvation.*" He wished for no deliverance but that which came from God: his one desire was for "thy salvation." But for that divine deliverance he was eager to the last degree,—up to the full measure of his strength, yea, and beyond it till he fainted. So strong was his desire that it produced prostration of spirit. He grew weary with waiting, faint with watching, sick with urgent need. Thus the sincerity and the eagerness of his desires were proved. Nothing else could satisfy him but deliverance wrought out by the hand of God, his inmost nature yearned and pined for salvation from the God of all grace, and he must have it or utterly fail. "*But I hope in thy word.*" Therefore he felt that salvation would come, for God cannot break his promise, nor disappoint the hope which his own word has excited: yea, the fulfilment of his word is near at hand when our hope is firm and our desire fervent. Hope alone can keep the soul from fainting by using the smelling-bottle of the promise. Yet hope does not quench desire for a speedy answer to prayer; it increases our importunity, for it both stimulates ardour and sustains the heart under delays. To faint for salvation, and to be kept from utterly failing by the hope of it, is the frequent experience of the Christian man. We are "faint yet pursuing." Hope sustains when desire exhausts. While the grace of desire throws us down, the grace of hope lifts us up again.

82. "*Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?*" His eyes gave out with eagerly gazing for the kind appearance of the Lord, while his heart in weariness cried out for speedy comfort. To read the word till the eyes can no longer see is but a small thing compared with watching for the fulfilment of the promise till the inner eyes of expectancy begin to grow dim with hope deferred. We may not set times to God, for this is to limit the Holy One of Israel; yet we may urge our suit with importunity,

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and make fervent enquiry as to why the promise tarries. David sought no comfort except that which comes from God; his question is, "When wilt *thou* comfort me?" If help does not come from heaven it will never come at all: all the good man's hopes look that way, he has not a glance to dart in any other direction. This experience of waiting and fainting is well known by full-grown saints, and it teaches them many precious lessons which they would never learn by any other means. Among the choice results is this one—that the body rises into sympathy with the soul, both heart and flesh cry out for the living God, and even the eyes find a tongue, "saying, When wilt thou comfort me?" It must be an intense longing which is not satisfied to express itself by the lips, but speaks with the eyes, by those eyes failing through intense watching. Eyes can speak right eloquently; they use both mutes and liquids, and can sometimes say more than tongues. David says in another place, "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping" (Ps. vi. 8). Specially are our eyes eloquent when they begin to fail with weariness and woe. A humble eye lifted up to heaven in silent prayer may flash such flame as shall melt the bolts which bar the entrance of vocal prayer, and so heaven shall be taken by storm with the artillery of tears. Blessed are the eyes that are strained in looking after God. The eyes of the Lord will see to it that such eyes do not actually fail. How much better to watch for the Lord with aching eyes than to have them sparkling at the glitter of vanity.

83. "*For I am become like a bottle in the smoke.*" The skins used for containing wine, when emptied, were hung up in the tent, and when the place reeked with smoke the skins grew black and sooty, and in the heat they became wrinkled and worn. The Psalmist's face through sorrow had become dark and dismal, furrowed and lined; indeed, his whole body had so sympathized with his sorrowing mind as to have lost its natural moisture, and to have become like a skin dried and tanned. His character had been smoked with slander, and his mind parched with persecution; he was half afraid that he would become useless and incapable through so much mental suffering, and that men would look upon him as an old worn-out skin bottle, which could hold nothing and answer no purpose. What a metaphor for a man to use who was certainly a poet, a divine, and a master in Israel, if not a king, and a man after God's own heart! It is little wonder if we, commoner folk, are made to think very little of ourselves, and are filled with distress of mind. Some of us know the inner meaning of this simile, for we, too, have felt dingy, mean, and worthless, only fit to be cast away. Very black and hot has been the smoke which has enveloped us; it seemed to come not alone from the Egyptian furnace, but from the bottomless pit; and it had a clinging power which made the soot of it fasten upon us and blacken us with miserable thoughts.

"*Yet do I not forget thy statutes.*" Here is the patience of the saints and the victory of faith. Blackened the man of God might be by falsehood, but the truth was in him, and he never gave it up. He was faithful to his King when he seemed deserted and left to the vilest uses. The promises came to his mind, and, what was a still better evidence of his loyalty, the statutes were there too: he stuck to his duties as well as to his comforts. The worst circumstances cannot destroy the true believer's hold upon his God. Grace is a living power which survives that which would suffocate all other forms of existence. Fire cannot consume it, and smoke cannot smother it. A man may be reduced to skin and bone, and all his comfort may be dried out of him, and yet he may hold fast his integrity and glorify his God. It is, however, no marvel that in such a case the eyes which are tormented with the smoke cry out for the Lord's delivering hand, and the heart heated and faint longs for the divine salvation.

84. "*How many are the days of thy servant?*" I cannot hope to live long in such a condition, thou must come speedily to my rescue or I shall die.

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Shall all my short life be consumed in such destroying sorrows? The brevity of life is a good argument against the length of an affliction. Perhaps the Psalmist means that his days seemed too many when they were spent in such distress. He half wished that they were ended, and therefore he asked in trouble, "How many are the days of thy servant?" Like a hired servant, he had a certain term to serve, and he would not complain; but still the time seemed long because his griefs were so heavy. No one knows the appointed number of our days except the Lord, and therefore to him the appeal is made that he would not prolong them beyond his servant's strength. It cannot be the Lord's mind that his own servant should always be treated so unjustly; there must be an end to it; when would it be?

"*When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?*" He had placed his case in the Lord's hands, and he prayed that sentence might be given and put into execution. He desired nothing but justice, that his character might be cleared and his persecutors silenced. He knew that God would certainly avenge his own elect, but the day of rescue tarried, the hours dragged heavily along, and the persecuted one cried day and night for deliverance.

85. "*The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law.*" As men who hunt wild beasts are wont to make pitfalls and snares, so did David's foes endeavour to entrap him. They went laboriously and cunningly to work to ruin him, "they digged *pits*"; not one, but many. If one would not take him, perhaps another would, and so they digged again and again. One would think that such haughty people would not have soiled their fingers with digging; but they swallowed their pride in hopes of swallowing their victim. Whereas they ought to have been ashamed of such meanness, they were conscious of no shame, but, on the contrary, were proud of their cleverness; proud of setting a trap for a godly man. "*Which are not after thy law.*" Neither the men nor their pits were according to the divine law: they were cruel and crafty deceivers, and their pits were contrary to the Levitical law, and contrary to the command which bids us love our neighbour. If men would keep to the statutes of the Lord, they would lift the fallen out of the pit, or fill up the pit so that none might stumble into it; but they would never spend a moment in working injury to others. When, however, they become proud, they are sure to despise others; and for this reason they seek to circumvent them, that they may afterwards hold them up to ridicule.

It was well for David that his enemies were God's enemies, and that their attacks upon him had no sanction from the Lord. It was also much to his gain that he was not ignorant of their devices, for he was thus put upon his guard, and led to watch his ways lest he should fall into their pits. While he kept to the law of the Lord he was safe, though even then it was an uncomfortable thing to have his path made dangerous by the craft of wanton malice.

86. "*All thy commandments are faithful.*" He had no fault to find with God's law, even though he had fallen into sad trouble through obedience to it. Whatever the command might cost him it was worth it; he felt that God's way might be rough, but it was right; it might make him enemies, but still it was his best friend. He believed that in the end God's command would turn out to his own profit, and that he should be no loser by obeying it.

"*They persecute me wrongfully.*" The fault lay with his persecutors, and neither with his God nor with himself. He had done no injury to anyone, nor acted otherwise than according to truth and justice; therefore he confidently appeals to his God, and cries, "*Help thou me.*" This is a golden prayer, as precious as it is short. The words are few, but the meaning is full. Help was needed that the persecuted one might avoid the snare, might bear up under reproach, and might act so prudently as to baffle his foes. God's help is our hope. Whoever may hurt us, it matters not so long

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as the Lord helps us; for if indeed the Lord help us, none can really hurt us. Many a time have these words been groaned out by troubled saints, for they are such as suit a thousand conditions of need, pain, distress, weakness, and sin. "Help, Lord," will be a fitting prayer for youth and age, for labour and suffering, for life and death. No other help is sufficient, but God's help is all-sufficient, and we cast ourselves upon it without fear.

87. "*They had almost consumed me upon earth.*" His foes had almost destroyed him so as to make him altogether fail. If they could they would have eaten him, or burned him alive; anything so that they could have made a full end of the good man. Evidently he had fallen under their power to a large extent, and they had so used that power that he was well-nigh consumed. He was almost gone from off the earth; but almost is not altogether, and so he escaped by the skin of his teeth. The lions are chained: they can rage no further than our God permits. The Psalmist perceives the limit of their power: they could only touch his earthly life and earthly goods. Upon earth they almost ate him up, but he had an eternal portion which they could not even nibble at. "*But I forsook not thy precepts.*" Nothing could drive him from obeying the Lord. If we stick to the precepts we shall be rescued by the promises. If ill-usage could have driven the oppressed saint from the way of right the purpose of the wicked would have been answered, and we should have heard no more of David. If we are resolved to die sooner than forsake the Lord, we may depend upon it that we shall not die, but shall live to see the overthrow of them that hate us.

88. "*Quicken me after thy lovingkindness.*" Most wise, most blessed prayer! If we are revived in our own personal piety we shall be out of reach of our assailants. Our best protection from tempters and persecutors is more life. Lovingkindness itself cannot do us greater service than by making us to have life more abundantly. When we are quickened we are able to bear affliction, to baffle cunning, and to conquer sin. We look to the lovingkindness of God as the source of spiritual revival, and we entreat the Lord to quicken us, not according to our deserts, but after the boundless energy of his grace. What a blessed word is this "lovingkindness." Take it to pieces, and admire its double force of love. "*So shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.*" If quickened by the Holy Ghost we shall be sure to exhibit a holy character. We shall be faithful to sound doctrine when the Spirit visits us and makes us faithful. None keep the word of the Lord's mouth unless the word of the Lord's mouth quickens them. We ought greatly to admire the spiritual prudence of the Psalmist, who does not so much pray for freedom from trial as for renewed life that he may be supported under it. When the inner life is vigorous all is well. David prayed for a sound heart in the closing verse of the last octave, and here he seeks a revived heart; this is going to the root of the matter, by seeking that which is the most needful of all things. Lord, let it be heart-work with us, and let our hearts be right with thee.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 81 TO 88.

*The whole eight verses*, 81—89.—The eleventh letter, *Caph*, signifies the *hollowed hand*. The expositors, however, looking only to the meaning *curved*, which is but half of its import, explain the section as signifying the act of bowing down in penitence, or as noting that the fathers of the Old Testament were like veteran soldiers, stooping with years and toil, and bowed down yet further by the heavy weight of the law, only removable by that coming of Christ for which they prayed. Others extend the notion to the saints of the church, weighed down by the sorrows and cares of this life, and therefore desiring to be dissolved and to be with Christ. The true meaning is to be sought in the full interpretation of the word; for the hand is hollowed either in order to retain something which actually lies in it, or to receive something about to be placed in it by another. Thus the hand may be God's, as the giver of bounty, or man's, as the receiver of it; and the whole scope of the section, as a prayer for speedy help, is that man holds out his hand as a beggar, supplicating the mercy of God.—*Jerome, Ambrose, and others, in Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 81.—"*My soul fainteth for thy salvation.*" The word here rendered "*fainteth*" is the same that in Ps. lxxiii. 26 is translated "*faileth*": "My flesh and my heart *faileth*." The idea is, that his strength gave way; he had such an intense *desire* for salvation that he became weak and powerless. Any strong emotion *may* thus prostrate us; and the love of God, the desire of his favour, the longing for heaven, may be so intense as to produce this result.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 81.—"*My soul fainteth.*" Fainting is proper to the body, but here it is ascribed to the soul; as also in many other places. The Apostle saith, "Lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds" (Heb. xii. 3); where two words are used, weariness and fainting, both taken from the body. Weariness is a lesser, fainting is a higher degree of deficiency: in weariness, the body requireth some rest or refreshment, when the active power is weakened, and the vital spirits and principles of motion are dulled; but, in fainting, the vital power is contracted, and retireth, and leaveth the outward parts lifeless and senseless. When a man is wearied, his strength is abated; when he fainteth, he is quite spent. These things, by a metaphor, are applied to the soul, or mind. A man is weary, when the fortitude of his mind, his moral or spiritual strength, is broken, or begins to abate, when his soul sits uneasy under sufferings; but when he sinketh under the burden of grievous, tedious, or long affliction, then he is said to faint, when all the reasons and grounds of his comfort are quite spent, and he can hold out no longer.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 81.—"*My soul fainteth.*" What is this fainting but the lofty state of raptured contemplation in which the strength of heavenly affections weakens those of earth. Just as the ascent into the highest mountains causes a new respiration, as when Daniel had a great vision from God, he tells us "he fainted and was sick certain days."—*E. Paxton Hood*, 1871.

*Verse* 81.—"*My soul fainteth for thy salvation; but I hope.*" Believe under a cloud, and wait for him when there is no moonlight nor starlight. Let faith live and breathe, and lay hold of the sure salvation of God, when clouds and darkness are about you, and appearance of rotting in the prison before you. Take heed of unbelieving hearts, which can father lies upon Christ. Beware of "Doth his promise fail for evermore?" for it was a man, and not God said it. Who dreameth that a promise of God can fail, fall aswoon, or die? Who can make God sick, or his promises weak? When we are pleased to seek a plea with Christ, let us plead that we hope in him. O stout word of faith, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" O sweet epitaph, written upon the grave-stone of a departed believer, namely,

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"I died hoping, and my dust and ashes believe in life!" Faith's eyes, that can see through a mill-stone, can see through a gloom * of God, and under it read God's thoughts of love and peace. Hold fast Christ in the dark; surely ye shall see the salvation of God. Your adversaries are ripe and dry for the fire. Yet a little while, and they shall go up in a flame; the breath of the Lord, like a river of brimstone, shall kindle about them.—*Samuel Rutherford*, 1600—1601.

*Verse* 81.—"*For thy salvation.*" Understood in a higher sense, the holy man longs for the coming of the Saviour in the flesh.—*Cornelius Jansen.*

*Verse* 81.—"THY *salvation.*" A believer in God, how afflicted so ever he be, seeketh not to be delivered but in a way allowed by God; "*My soul fainteth for thy salvation*"; or, till thou deliver me in thy good way.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 81.—"*I hope in thy word.*" David knew where he moored his ship. Hope without a promise is like an anchor without ground to hold by; but David's hope fixed itself upon the divine word.—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse* 81.—"*I hope in thy word:*" *i.e.* I hope beyond anything I understand, and beyond anything I can possibly do, and beyond anything I deserve, and beyond all carnal and spiritual consolations, for I desire and look for Thee only. I seek Thee, not Thine: I long to hear "*Thy word*," that I may obey it in patience and meekness.—*Le Blanc.*

*Verses* 81, 83.—It is good in all times of persecution or affliction to have an eye both on the promises and on the precepts; for the looking to the promise doth encourage to hope, and the eyeing of the precepts doth prove the hope to be sound. The Psalmist *hoped in the word* (verse 81), and (verse 83), *he forgot not the statutes.—David Dickson.*

*Verse* 82.—"*Mine eyes fail for thy word.*" Has a mother promised to visit her son or daughter? should she not be able to go, the remark of the son or daughter will be: "Alas! my mother promised to come to me: how long have I been looking for her? But a speck has grown on my eye." "I cannot see, my eyes have failed me"; that is, by looking so intensely for her coming.—*Joseph Roberts.*

*Verse* 82.—"*Mine eyes fail for thy word.*" He was continuously lifting the eyes to heaven, looking for help from God. He was so perpetually doing this, that at length the eyes themselves became dim.

"*When wilt thou comfort me?*" He was saying this in his heart; he was saying this with his mouth; he was saying the same thing with his eyes perpetually looking up to heaven.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse* 82.—"*For thy word.*" The children of God make more of a promise than others do; and that upon a double account: partly, because they value the blessing promised; partly, because they are satisfied with the assurance given by God's word; so that, whereas others pass by these things with a careless eye, their souls are lifted up to the constant and earnest expectation of the blessing promised. It is said of the hireling, that he must have his wages before the sun go down, because he is poor and hath set his heart upon it (Deut. xxiv. 15); or, as it is in the Hebrew, lifted up his soul to it, meaning thereby both his desire and hope. He esteemeth his wages; for it is the solace of his labours, and the maintenance of his life; and he assuredly expecteth it, upon the promise and covenant of him who setteth him awork. So it is with the children of God; they esteem the blessings promised, and God's word giveth them good assurance that they do not wait upon him in vain.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 82.—"*Saying, When.*" The same spirit of faith which teaches a man to cry earnestly, teaches him to wait patiently; for as it assures him that mercy is in the Lord's hand, so it assures him, it will come forth in the Lord's time.—*John Mason*, 1688.

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*Verse* 82.—"*When wilt thou comfort me?*" It is a customable manner of God's working with his children, to delay the answer to their prayers, and to suspend the performance of his promises: not because he is unwilling to give, but because he will have them better prepared to receive. *Tardius dando quod petimus instantia nobis orationis indicit:* * he is slow to give that which we seek, that we should not seek slowly, but may be awakened to instancy and fervency in prayer, which he knows to be the service most acceptable unto him, and most profitable unto ourselves.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 82.—"*When wilt* THOU *comfort me?*" Let us complain not *of* God, but *to* God. Complaints of God give a vent to murmuring; but complaints to God, to faith, hope, and patience.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 82.—The prophet, to prevent it from being supposed that he was too effeminate and faint-hearted, intimates that his fainting was not without cause. In asking God, "*When wilt thou comfort me?*" he shows, with sufficient plainness, that he was for a long time, as it were, cast off and forsaken.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 82.—"*When wilt thou comfort me?*" The people of God are sometimes very disconsolate, and need comforting, through the prevalence of sin, the power of Satan's temptations, the hidings of God's face, and a variety of afflictions, when they apply to God for comfort, who only can comfort them, and who has set times to do it; but they are apt to think it long, and enquire, as David here, when it will be.—*John Gill.*

*Verse* 82.—"*When wilt thou comfort me?*" A poor woman had been long time questioning herself, and doubting of her salvation; when at last the Lord made it good unto her soul that Christ was her own, then her minister said unto her, The Lord will not always give his children a cordial, but he hath it ready for them when they are fainting.—*Thomas Hooker.*

*Verse* 82.—"*When wilt thou comfort me?*" Comfort is necessary because a great part of our temptations lies in troubles, as well as allurements. Sense of pain may discompose us as well as pleasure entice us. The world is a persecuting as well as a tempting world. The flesh troubleth as well as enticeth. The Devil is a disquieting as well as an ensnaring Devil. But yet comfort, though necessary, is not so necessary as holiness: therefore, though comfort is not to be despised, yet sincere love to God is to be preferred, and, though it be not dispensed so certainly, so constantly, and in so high a degree, in this world, we must be contented. The Spirit's comforting work is oftener interrupted than the work of holiness; yet so much as is necessary to enable us to serve God in this world, we shall assuredly receive.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 83.—"*A bottle in the smoke.*" Sleep was out of the question, for I was . . . . almost smothered with the smoke from a wood fire, for there was no chimney. I was indeed "*like a bottle in the smoke,*" turned black and dried almost to cracking; for this was something of what the Psalmist had in view. The bottles being of leather, and being hung up in rooms with large fires of wood, and without chimneys, they became smoke-dried, shrivelled, and unfit for use.—*From "My Wanderings," by John Gadsby,* 1860.

*Verse* 83.—"*Like a bottle in the smoke.*" The tent of a common Arab is so smoky a habitation, that I consider the expression of *a bottle in the smoke,* to be equivalent to that of *a bottle in the tent of an Arab.* There was a fire, we find, in that Arab tent to which Bishop Pococke was conducted when he was going to Jerusalem. How smoky must such an habitation be, and how black all its utensils! Le Bruyn in going from Aleppo to Scanderoon was made sufficiently sensible of this: for being obliged to pass a whole night in a hut of reeds, in the middle of which there was a fire, to boil a kettle of

* Chrysostom.

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meat that hung over it, and to bake some bread among the ashes, he found the smoke intolerable, the door being the only place by which it could get out of the hut.

To the *blackness* of a goat-skin bottle, in a tent, but to the *meanness* also of such a drinking-vessel, the Psalmist seems to refer, and it was a most natural image for him to make use of, driven from among the vessels of silver and gold in the palace of Saul, to live as the Arabs do and did, and consequently often obliged to drink out of a smoked leather-bottle.—*Thomas Harmer*, 1719—1788.

*Verse* 83.—"*For I am become like a bottle in the smoke.*" A bottle in the smoke has very little inflation, fatness, moisture, beauty. Thus God wastes away, debases, and empties his people, while he exercises them with tribulations and the disquiet of hoping and waiting. The glory and eagerness of the flesh must be emptied, that the Divine gifts may find room, and the remembrance of the commandments of God may be restrained, which cannot be well kept in bottles which are swollen, inflated, and filled.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse* 83.—"*A bottle in the smoke.*" One object amongst the ancients of such exposure was to mellow the wine by the gradual ascent of the heat and smoke from the fire over which the skin was suspended; and thus the words teach us the uses of affliction in ripening and improving the soul.—*Rosenmüller, quoted in Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 83.—"*For I am become like a bottle in the smoke,*" etc. Satan can afflict the *body* by the *mind.* For these two are so closely bound together that their good and bad estate is shared between them. If the heart be merry the countenance is cheerful, the strength is renewed, the bones do flourish like an herb. If the heart be troubled, the health is impaired, the strength is dried up, the marrow of the bones wasted, etc. Grief in the heart is like a moth in the garment, it insensibly consumeth the body and disordereth it. This advantage of weakening the body falls into Satan's hands by necessary consequence, as the prophet's ripe figs, that fell into the mouth of the eater. And surely he is well pleased with it, as he is an enemy both to body and soul. But 'tis a greater satisfaction to him, in that as he can make the sorrows of the mind produce the weakness and sickness of the body; so can he make the distemper of the body (by a reciprocal requital) to augment the trouble of the mind. How little can a sickly body do? it disables a man for all services; he cannot oft pray, nor read, nor hear. Sickness takes away the sweetness and comfort of religious exercises; this gives occasion for them to think the worst of themselves; they think the soul is weary of the ways of God when the body cannot hold out.—*Richard Gilpin, in "A Treatise of Satan's Temptations,"* 1677.

*Verse* 83.—"*Like a bottle in the smoke.*" In this did the afflicted Psalmist find a striking emblem of his own spiritual state. He waited for the Lord to come. In spirit he was dried up by pressure upon him; and he still waited for the Lord to come, declaring his shrivelled condition. Perhaps his outward man partook of the same sad qualities at this time. . . . The outward appearance of the man of God, to which he may be alluding, was, however, but the semblance of his spiritual nature at this period, whatever may have been the visible effects. David was exposed to the calumnious reports of evil-minded men, and to the hot persecution of relentless enemies, till the effect upon his mind was such that his whole spiritual nature resembled, in his own mind, a skin hung up in the smoke for a length of time. Not only was he shrivelled in public estimation, but also in his own mind; not indeed because at this time, and on the ground of the charges made against him, he felt that he deserved it; but because so incessant and multifarious was the bitter invasion of his spirit, that even with all his faith in God, he well-nigh literally sunk under it. The term given in our translation to the original would imply, that he bore himself well notwithstanding—

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"*For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.*" Whereas the words rendered more literally would convey the import that all this happened to him even while he was in the very way of duty: "*I am become like a bottle in the smoke—I do not forget thy statutes.*" He was directly in the way of the Lord's appointments for all salvation; yet trouble came. It is sad when our spiritual man becomes shrivelled and dried up because of our falling into sin, or because of guilty omissions; but here seems to be a falling off of the spiritual man, and of the physical man, while the believer is conscious that he is not forgetting the statutes of his gracious God.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 83.—Observe here the difference between the beauty and strength of the body and of the soul: the beauty of the soul groweth fairer by afflictions, whereas that of the body is blasted. David was a bottle shrivelled and shrunk up; yet the holy frame of his soul was not altered; his beauty was gone, but not his grace.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 83.—"*I am become like a bottle in the frost*" (so the Seventy translate it). When spiritual desires burn, carnal desires without doubt cool: on this account followeth, "*Since I am become like a bottle in the frost I do not forget thy righteousnesses.*" Truly he desireth this mortal flesh to be understood by the bottle, the heavenly blessing by the frost, whereby the lusts of the flesh as it were by the binding of the frost become sluggish: and hence it ariseth that the righteousnesses of God do not slip from the memory, so long as we do not meditate apart from them; since what the apostle saith (Rom. xiii. 14) is brought to pass: "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Therefore when he had said, "*For I have become like a bottle in the frost,*" he added, "*and I do not forget thy righteousnesses,*" that is, I forget them not, because I have become such. For the fervour of lust had cooled, that the memory of love might glow.—*Augustine.*

*Verse* 84.—"*How many are the days of thy servant?*" etc. Some read the two clauses apart, as if the first were a general complaint of the brevity of human life, such as is to be met with in other Psalms, and more frequently in the book of Job; and next, in their opinion, there follows a special prayer of the Psalmist that God would take vengeance upon his enemies. But I rather prefer joining the two clauses together, and limit both to David's afflictions; as if it had been said, Lord, how long hast thou determined to abandon thy servant to the will of the ungodly? when wilt thou set thyself in opposition to their cruelty and outrage, in order to take vengeance upon them? The Scriptures often use the word "*days*" in this sense. . . . By the use of the plural number is denoted a determinate portion of time, which, in other places, is compared to the "days of an hireling": Job xiv. 6; Isaiah xvi. 14. The Psalmist does not, then, bewail in general the transitory life of man, but he complains that the time of his state of warfare in this world had been too long protracted; and, therefore, he naturally desires that it might be brought to a termination. In expostulating with God about his troubles, he does not do so obstinately, or with a murmuring spirit; but still, in asking how long it will be necessary for him to suffer, he humbly prays that God would not delay to succour him.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 84.—"*When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?*" He declares that he does not doubt but that there will be at some period an end to his afflictions, and that there will be a time in which his haters and enemies will be judged and punished. He assumes the fact and therefore enquires the date. Thus in the saints their very impatience of delay does itself prove their confidence of future salvation and deliverance.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse* 84.—"*When wilt thou execute judgment,*" etc. This is an ordinary prayer, not against any certain persons, but rather generally against God's



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enemies and their evil courses. For the Lord executeth judgment upon his children for their conversion, as Paul (Acts ix.), and upon the wicked for their confusion. He prayeth against them that belonged not to God, and yet not so much against their persons as their evil causes; and no otherwise against their persons than as they are joined with the evil causes. Thus we may pray for the confusion of God's enemies; otherwise we cannot.—*R. Greenham.*

*Verse* 84.—In this verse there is none of the ten words used in reference to God's law.—*Adam Clarke.* [Is not judgment one of them?—C. H. S.]

*Verse* 85.—"*Pits.*" Hajji said he would tell me a tale or two about crocodiles, and he would begin by telling me how they catch them sometimes. A deep pit, he said, is dug by the side of the river, and then covered with doura straw. The crocodiles fall into these pits, and cannot get out again. . . . . There can be no doubt that formerly pits were dug for the crocodiles, as Hajji described, as is the case still in some parts of the world for other animals. To this custom allusion is made in Ps. vii. 15; ix. 15; x. 2; xxxv. 8; cxli. 10; Prov. xxvi. 27; Ecc. x. 8: etc. "He made a pit and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made." Probably also this was the kind of pit referred to in Exod. xxi. 33: "If a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it"; *i.e.*, not cover it effectually; "and an ass or an ox fall therein," etc.

Prisoners were sometimes shut up in pits, and left without water, literally to die of thirst. What a dreadful death! It is said that nothing can be more terrible. How dreadful must be their groans!—*John Gadsby.*

*Verse* 85.—"*The proud have digged pits.*" It seems strange that a proud man should be a digger of pits; but so it is; for pride for a time can submit itself to gain a greater vantage over him whom it would tread under foot. "The wicked is so proud that he seeks not God, yet he croucheth and boweth, to cause heaps of the poor to fall by his might," Ps. x. 4, 10. So proud Absalom abased himself to meanest subjects that so he might prepare a way to usurpation over his king and father. But mark, he saith not that he had fallen into the pits which his enemies had digged. No, no: in God's righteous judgments, the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands, while the good escape free. "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate." Ps. vii. 15, 16. Thus Haman hanselled the gallows which he raised for Mordecai; and Saul, when he thought by subtlety to slay David with the Philistine's sword (when he sent him out to seek two hundred of their foreskins in a dowry) was disappointed of his purpose; but he himself at length was slain by the sword.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 85.—Let men beware how they *dig pits* for others. All God's word testifies against such wickedness. How many tests are invented simply for the purpose of entangling men's consciences and furnishing ground for persecution.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 85.—"*Which are not after thy law.*" Hebrew, Not after thy law. It may refer to the men or to the practice. The men walk not according to thy law, and their fraudulent practices are not agreeable to thy law. The law of God condemned pits for tame beasts: Exodus xxi, 33, 34. Though it was lawful for hunters to take wild beasts, yet they were to take heed that a tame beast fell not therein, at their peril.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 85.—"*Which are not after thy law.*" After God's law they could not be while they were doing such things. Perhaps he refers to the deed more than to the men: "The proud have digged pits for me, which is not after thy law"—which is against thy law; and they would seem to do it because it is against thy law—delighting in wickedness as they do. Such men would seem to imbibe the foul spirit which Milton ascribes to the fallen archangel:

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"Evil, be thou my good." Obviously, however, the words contain this sentiment,—The proud have sought to overthrow me, because they are not obedient to thy law. Hereupon he sets their conduct in the light of God's holy commandments, that the comparison may be made: "*All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully.*" Whatever the Lord did was done in truth; these men acted against his servant without cause, and in so doing they also acted in defiance of his known will.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 85.—"*The wicked have told me fables, but not as thy law*" (So the Septuagint). The special reason why he desires to be freed from the company of the wicked is, because they always tempt the pious by relating the pleasures of the world, which are nothing but fables, filthy, fleeting pleasures, more fallacious than real—nothing like the grand and solid pleasure that always flows from a pious observance of the law of the Lord. —*Robert Bellarmine.*

*Verse* 86.—"*All thy commandments are faithful.*" David setteth down here three points. The one is that God is true; and after that he addeth a protestation of his good conduct and guidance, and of the malice of his adversaries: thirdly, he calleth upon God in his afflictions. Now as concerning the first, he showeth us that although Satan to shake us, and in the end utterly to carry us away, subtilly and cunningly goeth about to deceive us, we must, to the contrary, learn how to know his ambushes, and to keep us from out of them. So often then as we are grieved with adversity and affliction, where must we begin? See Satan how he pitcheth his nets and layeth his ambushes to induce and persuade us to come into them, what sayeth he? Dost thou not see thyself forsaken of thy God? Where are the promises whereunto thou didst trust? Now here thou seest thyself to be a wretched, forlorn creature. So then thou right well seest that God hath deceived thee, and that the promises whereunto thou trustedst appertain nothing at all unto thee. See here the subtlety of Satan. What is now to be done? We are to conclude with David and say, yet God is true and faithful. Let us, I say, keep in mind the truth of God as a shield to beat back whatsoever Satan is able to lay unto our charge. When he shall go about to cause us to deny our faith, when he shall lie about us to make us believe that God thinketh no more of us, or else that it is in vain for us to trust unto his promises; let us know the clean contrary and believe that it is very plain and sound truth which God saith unto us. Although Satan casteth at us never so many darts, although he have never so exceeding many devices against us, although now and then by violence, sometimes with subtlety and cunning, it seemeth in very deed to us that he should overcome us; nevertheless he shall never bring it to pass, for the truth of God shall be made sure and certain in our hearts.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 86.—"*All thy commandments are faithful.*" The Hebrew is *Faithfulness;* that is to say, they are true, sure, equal, infallible. "*They have persecuted me wrongfully:*" no doubt for asserting God's truths and commands, and adhering thereto.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 86.—"*They persecute me wrongfully.*" There is a stress on the word *falsely* (or wrongfully); for that is a true saying of a martyr saint,* "The cause, not the pain, makes the martyr." Wherefore the apostle teaches us, "Let none of you suffer as a murderer or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."—*Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 86.—"*Help thou me.*" "God help me" is an excellent, comprehensive prayer; it is a pity it should ever be used lightly and as a bye-word. —*Matthew Henry.*

* Cyprian.

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*Verse* 87.—"*Almost consumed.*" The lives of good men are full of narrow escapes. The righteous are scarcely saved. Many a time their feet do almost slip. Yet he, who has redeemed them, will not let them so fall that they can rise no more. One of their greatest perils is, a temptation to use unlawful means for terminating their trials.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 87.—It should be noticed that he says "*upon the earth:*" for it shows, that even if his enemies had taken away his life on earth, he nevertheless confidently looked for another life in heaven; and that already he had by faith entered into heaven, and was living a heavenly life; so that if the life of the body should be taken away, it was not to be regarded as an evil. They who live such a life speedily recover from despair.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

*Verse* 88.—"*Quicken me after thy lovingkindness.*" Finally, the man of God appears entreating to be quickened, that so he may be enabled to keep the divine testimony. . . . Here is a last resort, but it is a sure one. Let the living principles of divine grace be imparted to the soul, and the believer will be raised above dismay at the face of men. How does the spiritual mind triumph over even the infirmities of the body! We may behold this from the death-bed of the believer, and we may recall this in the lives and deaths of many eminent ones. The man of pure mind goes right to the fountain of life. He goes, with understanding, for he takes in the character in which the Lord hath spoken of himself: "*Quicken me after thy lovingkindness.*" All at once he lays aside thought of his enemies; he is present with his God. His desire is to rise into higher spiritual existence, that he may hold closer communion with the Father of lights with whom there is no variableness.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 88.—"*Quicken me,*" etc. He had prayed before, "Quicken me in thy righteousness" (verse 40); but here "Quicken me after thy lovingkindness." The surest token of God's good-will towards us is his good work in us.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 88.—"*Quicken me.*" Many a time in this psalm doth David make this petition; and it seems strange that so often he should acknowledge himself a dead man, and desire God to quicken him. But so it is unto the child of God: every desertion and decay of strength is a death. So desirous are they to live unto God, that when they fail in it, and find any inability in their souls to serve God as they would, they account themselves but dead, and pray the Lord to quicken them.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 88.—"*The testimony of thy mouth.*" The title here given to the directory of our duty—"*The testimony of God's mouth,*" gives increasing strength to our obligations. Thus let every word we read or hear be regarded as coming directly from the "mouth of God" (John vi. 63). What reverence! what implicit submission does it demand! May it ever find us in the posture of attention, humility, and faith! each one of us ready to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."—*Charles Bridges.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 89 TO 96.

FOR ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

90 Thy faithfulness *is* unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.

91 They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all *are* thy servants.

92 Unless thy law *had been* my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

93 I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

94 I *am* thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: *but* I will consider thy testimonies.

96 I have seen an end of all perfection: *but* thy commandment *is* exceeding broad.

89. "*For ever, O* LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven.*" The strain is more joyful, for experience has given the sweet singer a comfortable knowledge of the word of the Lord, and this makes a glad theme. After tossing about on a sea of trouble the Psalmist here leaps to shore and stands upon a rock. Jehovah's word is not fickle nor uncertain; it is settled, determined, fixed, sure, immovable. Man's teachings change so often that there is never time for them to be settled; but the Lord's word is from of old the same, and will remain unchanged eternally. Some men are never happier than when they are unsettling everything and everybody; but God's mind is not with them. The power and glory of heaven have confirmed each sentence which the mouth of the Lord has spoken, and so confirmed it that to all eternity it must stand the same,—settled in heaven, where nothing can reach it. In the former section David's soul fainted, but here the good man looks out of self and perceives that the Lord fainteth not, neither is weary, neither is there any failure in his word.

The verse takes the form of an ascription of praise: the faithfulness and immutability of God are fit themes for holy song, and when we are tired with gazing upon the shifting scene of this life, the thought of the immutable promise fills our mouth with singing. God's purposes, promises, and precepts are all settled in his own mind, and none of them shall be disturbed. Covenant settlements will not be removed, however unsettled the thoughts of men may become; let us therefore settle it in our minds that we abide in the faith of our Jehovah as long as we have any being.

90. "*Thy faithfulness is unto all generations.*" This is an additional glory: God is not affected by the lapse of ages; he is not only faithful to one man throughout his lifetime, but to his children's children after him, yea, and to all generations so long as they keep his covenant and remember his commandments to do them. The promises are ancient things, yet they are not worn out by centuries of use, for the divine faithfulness endureth for ever. He who succoured his servants thousands of years ago still shows himself strong on the behalf of all them that trust in him. "*Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.*" Nature is governed by fixed laws; the globe keeps its course by the divine command, and displays no erratic movements: the seasons observe their predestined order, the sea obeys the rule of ebb and flow, and all things else are marshalled in their appointed order. There is an analogy between the word of God and the works of God, and

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specially in this, that they are both of them constant, fixed, and unchangeable. God's word which established the world is the same as that which he has embodied in the Scriptures; by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and specially by him who is emphatically THE WORD. When we see the world keeping its place and all its laws abiding the same, we have herein assurance that the Lord will be faithful to his covenant, and will not allow the faith of his people to be put to shame. If the earth abideth the spiritual creation will abide; if God's word suffices to establish the world surely it is enough for the establishment of the individual believer.

91. "*They continue this day according to thine ordinances.*" Because the Lord has bid the universe abide, therefore it stands, and all its laws continue to operate with precision and power. Because the might of God is ever present to maintain them, therefore do all things continue. The word which spake all things into existence has supported them till now, and still supports them both in being and in well-being. God's ordinance is the reason for the continued existence of creation. What important forces these ordinances are! "*For all are thy servants.*" Created by thy word they obey that word, thus answering the purpose of their existence, and working out the design of their Creator. Both great things and small pay homage to the Lord. No atom escapes his rule, no world avoids his government. Shall we wish to be free of the Lord's sway and become lords unto ourselves? If we were so, we should be dreadful exceptions to a law which secures the well-being of the universe. Rather while we read concerning all things else—they continue and they serve, let us continue to serve, and to serve more perfectly as our lives are continued. By that word which is settled may we be settled; by that voice which establishes the earth may we be established; and by that command which all created things obey may we be made the servants of the Lord God Almighty.

92. "*Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.*" That word which has preserved the heavens and the earth also preserves the people of God in their time of trial. With that word we are charmed; it is a mine of delight to us. We take a double and treble delight in it, and derive a multiplied delight from it, and this stands us in good stead when all other delights are taken from us. We should have felt ready to lie down and die of our griefs if the spiritual comforts of God's word had not uplifted us; but by their sustaining influence we have been borne above all the depressions and despairs which naturally grow out of severe affliction. Some of us can set our seal to this statement. Our affliction, if it had not been for divine grace, would have crushed us out of existence, so that we should have perished. In our darkest seasons nothing has kept us from desperation but the promise of the Lord: yea, at times nothing has stood between us and self-destruction save faith in the eternal word of God. When worn with pain until the brain has become dazed and the reason well-nigh extinguished, a sweet text has whispered to us its heart-cheering assurance, and our poor struggling mind has reposed upon the bosom of God. That which was our delight in prosperity has been our light in adversity; that which in the day kept us from presuming has in the night kept us from perishing. This verse contains a mournful supposition "*unless*"; describes a horrible condition—"*perished in mine affliction*"; and implies a glorious deliverance, for he did not die, but live to proclaim the honours of the word of God.

93. "*I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.*" When we have felt the quickening power of a precept we never can forget it. We may read it, learn it, repeat it, and think we have it, and yet it may slip out of our minds; but if it has once given us life or renewed that life, there is no fear of its falling from our recollection. Experience teaches, and teaches effectually. How blessed a thing it is to have the precepts

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written on the heart with the golden pen of experience, and graven on the memory with the divine stylus of grace. Forgetfulness is a great evil in holy things; we see here the man of God fighting against it, and feeling sure of victory because he knew the life-giving energy of the word in his own soul. That which quickens the heart is sure to quicken the memory.

It seems singular that he should ascribe quickening to the precepts, and yet it lies in them and in all the words of the Lord alike. It is to be noted that when the Lord raised the dead he addressed to them the word of command. He said, "Lazarus, come forth," or "Maid, arise." We need not fear to address gospel precepts to dead sinners, since by them the Spirit gives them life. Remark that the Psalmist does not say that the precepts quickened him, but that the Lord quickened him by their means: thus he traces the life from the channel to the source, and places the glory where it is due. Yet at the same time he prized the instruments of the blessing, and resolved never to forget them. He had already remembered them when he likened himself to a bottle in the smoke, and now he feels that whether in the smoke or in the fire the memory of the Lord's precepts shall never depart from him.

94. "*I am thine, save me.*" A comprehensive prayer with a prevailing argument. Consecration is a good plea for preservation. If we are conscious that we are the Lord's we may be confident that he will save us. We are the Lord's by creation, election, redemption, surrender, and acceptance; and hence our firm hope and assured belief that he will save us. A man will surely save his own child: Lord, save *me*. The need of salvation is better seen by the Lord's people than by any others, and hence their prayer—"save me"; they know that only God can save them, and hence they cry to him alone; and they know that no merit can be found in themselves, and hence they urge a reason fetched from the grace of God,—"I am thine." "*For I have sought thy precepts.*" Thus had he proved that he was the Lord's. He might not have attained to all the holiness which he desired, but he had studiously aimed at being obedient to the Lord, and hence he begged to be saved even to the end. A man may be seeking the doctrines and the promises, and yet be unrenewed in heart; but to seek the precepts is a sure sign of grace; no one ever heard of a rebel or a hypocrite seeking the precepts. The Lord had evidently wrought a great work upon the Psalmist, and he besought him to carry it on to completion. Saving is linked with seeking, "save me, for I have sought"; and when the Lord sets us seeking he will not refuse us the saving. He who seeks holiness is already saved: if we have sought the Lord we may be sure that the Lord has sought us, and will certainly save us.

95. "*The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies.*" They were like wild beasts crouching by the way, or highwaymen waylaying a defenceless traveller; but the Psalmist went on his way without considering them, for he was considering something better, namely, the witness or testimony which God has borne to the sons of men. He did not allow the malice of the wicked to take him off from his holy study of the divine word. He was so calm that he could "consider"; so holy that he loved to consider the Lord's "testimonies"; so victorious over all their plots that he did not allow them to drive him from his pious contemplations. If the enemy cannot cause us to withdraw our thoughts from holy study, or our feet from holy walking, or our hearts from holy aspirations, he has met with poor success in his assaults. The wicked are the natural enemies of holy men and holy thoughts; if they could, they would not only damage us but destroy us, and if they cannot do this to-day they will wait for further opportunities, ever hoping that their evil designs may be compassed. They have waited hitherto in vain, and they will have to wait much longer yet; for if we are so unmoved that we do not even give them a thought their hope of destroying us must be a very poor one.

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Note the double waiting,—the patience of the wicked who watch long and carefully for an opportunity to destroy the godly, and then the patience of the saint who will not quit his meditations, even to quiet his foes. See how the serpent's seed lie in wait as an adder that biteth at the horse's heels; but see how the chosen of the Lord live above their venom, and take no more notice of them than if they had no existence.

96. "*I have seen an end of all perfection.*" He had seen its limit, for it went but a little way; he had seen its evaporation under the trials of life, its detection under the searching glance of truth, its exposure by the confession of the penitent. There is no perfection beneath the moon. Perfect men, in the absolute sense of the word, live only in a perfect world. Some men see no end to their own perfection, but this is because they are perfectly blind. The experienced believer has seen an end of all perfection in himself, in his brethren, in the best man's best works. It would be well if some who profess to be perfect could even see the beginning of perfection, for we fear they cannot have begun aright, or they would not talk so exceeding proudly. Is it not the beginning of perfection to lament your imperfection? There is no such thing as perfection in anything which is the work of man. "*But thy commandment is exceeding broad.*" When the breadth of the law is known the notion of perfection in the flesh vanishes: that law touches every act, word, and thought, and is of such a spiritual nature that it judges the motives, desires, and emotions of the soul. It reveals a perfection which convicts us for shortcomings as well as for transgressions, and does not allow us to make up for deficiencies in one direction by special carefulness in others. The divine ideal of holiness is far too broad for us to hope to cover all its wide arena, and yet it is no broader than it ought to be. Who would wish to have an imperfect law? Nay, its perfection is its glory; but it is the death of all glorying in our own perfection. There is a breadth about the commandment which has never been met to the full by a corresponding breadth of holiness in any mere man while here below; only in Jesus do we see it fully embodied. The law is in all respects a perfect code; each separate precept of it is far-reaching in its hallowed meaning, and the whole ten cover all, and leave no space wherein to please our passions. We may well adore the infinity of divine holiness, and then measure ourselves by its standard, and bow before the Lord in all lowliness, acknowledging how far we fall short of it.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 89 TO 96.

LAMED.—*Verse* 89.—Here the climax of the delineation of the suppliant's pilgrimage is reached. We have arrived at the centre of the psalm, and the thread of the connexion is purposely broken off. The substance of the first eleven strophes has evidently been: "Hitherto hath the Lord brought me: shall it be that I now perish?" To this the eleven succeeding strophes make answer, "The Lord's word changeth not; and in spite of all evil forebodings, the Lord will perfect concerning me the work that he hath already begun."—*Joseph Francis Thrupp*, 1860.

*Verse* 89.—"*For ever, O* LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven.*" These words are usually rendered as making but one proposition; but the accent *athnah* showeth there are two branches; the one asserting the eternity of God; the other, the constancy and permanency of his word. Thus, 1. "*For ever* [*art thou*] *O* LORD." 2. "*Thy word is settled in heaven.*" So the Syriac readeth it; and Geierus, and, after him, others prove and approve this reading. And so this verse and the following do the better correspond one with the other, if we observe beginning and ending: As thou art "for ever, O Lord," and "thy faithfulness is unto all generations," which are exactly parallel. And so also will the last clauses agree: "Thy word is settled in heaven," and, "thou hast established the earth, and it abideth."

It implieth that as God is eternal, so is his word, and that it hath a fit representation both in heaven and in earth: in heaven, in the constant motion of the heavenly bodies; in earth, in the consistency and permanency thereof; that as his word doth stand fast in heaven, so doth his faithfulness on earth, where the afflictions of the godly seem to contradict it.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 89.—"*For ever, O* LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven.*" When Job considers his body turned to dust and worms (Job xix. 19, 25), yet by faith he says, "My Redeemer lives," etc. Even when patience failed in Job, yet *faith* failed not. Though God kill all other graces and comforts, and my soul too, yet he shall not kill my faith, says he. If he separate my soul from my body, yet not faith from my soul. And therefore the just lives by faith, rather than by other graces, because when all is gone, yet faith remains, and faith remains because the *promise* remains: "*For ever, O* LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven.*" And this is the proper and principal meaning of this place.—*Matthew Lawrence.*

*Verse* 89.—"*For ever, O* LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven.*" If we look at God's word of promise, as it is in our unsettled hearts, we dream that it's as ready to waver as our hearts are; as the shadow of the sun and moon in the water seems to shake as much as the water doth which it shines upon. Yet for all this seeming shaking here below, the sun and moon go on in a steadfast course in heaven. So the Psalmist tells us that however our hearts stagger at a promise through unbelief, nay, and our unbelief makes us believe that the promise often is shaken; yet *God's word is settled*, though not *in our hearts*, yet "*in heaven*"; yea, and there "*for ever*," as settled as heaven itself is; yea, more than so; for "heaven and earth may pass," but "not one jot or tittle of the law (and therefore of the gospel) shall fail": Luke xvi. 17.—*Anthony Tuckney*, 1599—1670.

*Verse* 89.—"*Settled.*" J. M. Good translates the verse as follows—"For ever, O Jehovah, hath thy word given array to the heavens," and observes that the Hebrew word נִצַּב is a military term, and applies to arraying and marshalling the divisions of an army in their proper stations when taking the field. The hosts of heaven are here supposed to be arrayed or marshalled with a like exact order; and to maintain for ever the relative duties imposed on them: while the earth, like the heavens, has as established a march prescribed to it, which it equally fulfils; for all are the servants of the great Creator; and hence, as they change, produce the beautiful regularity of the

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seasons, the rich returns of harvest, and daily declare the glory of the Lord.

*Verse* 89.—"*In heaven.*" Whenever you look to heaven, remember that within you have a God, who hath fixed his residence and shown his glory there, and made it the seat both of his mercy and justice. You have also there a Saviour, who, after he had died for our sins, sat down at the right hand of Majesty, to see his promises accomplished, and by his word to subdue the whole world. There are angels that "do his commandment, hearkening to the voice of his word": Ps. ciii. 20. There are glorified saints, who see God face to face, and dwell with him for evermore, and came thither by the same covenant which is propounded to us, as the charter of our peace and hope. In the outer region of heaven we see the sun and moon, and all the heavenly bodies, move in that fixed course and order wherein God hath set them; and will God show his constancy in the course of nature, and be fickle and changeable in the covenant of grace, wherein he hath disposed the order and method of his mercies?—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verses* 89, 91.—In these verses there is affirmed to be an analogy between the word of God and the works of God. It is said of his "*word*," that it is "*settled in heaven*," and that it sustains its faithfulness from one generation to another. It is said of his "*works*," and more especially of those that are immediately around us, even of the earth which we inhabit, that as it was established at the first so it abideth afterwards. And then, as if to perfect the assimilation between them, it is said of both in the 91st verse, "*They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants*"; thereby identifying the sureness of that word which proceeded from his lips, with the unfailing constancy of that Nature which was formed and is upholden by his hands.

The constancy of Nature is taught by universal experience, and even strikes the popular eye as the most characteristic of those features which have been impressed upon her. It may need the aid of philosophy to learn how unvarying Nature is in all her processes—how even the seeming anomalies can be traced to a law that is inflexible—how what appears at first to be the caprices of her waywardness, are, in fact, the evolutions of a mechanism that never changes—and that the more thoroughly she is sifted and put to the test by the interrogations of the curious, the more certainly will they find that she walks by a rule which knows no abatement, and perseveres with obedient footstep in that even course from which the eye of strictest scrutiny has never yet detected one hair-breadth of deviation. It is no longer doubted by men of science, that every remaining semblance of irregularity in the universe is due, not to the fickleness of Nature, but to the ignorance of man—that her most hidden movements are conducted with a uniformity as rigorous as *Fate*—that even the fitful agitations of the weather have their law and their principle—that the intensity of every breeze, and the number of drops in every shower, and the formation of every cloud, and all the occurring alternations of storm and sunshine, and the endless shiftings of temperature, and those tremulous varieties of the air which our instruments have enabled us to discover but have not enabled us to explain—that still, they follow each other by a method of succession, which, though greatly more intricate, is yet as absolute in itself as the order of the seasons, or the mathematical courses of astronomy. This is the impression of every philosophical mind with regard to Nature, and it is strengthened by each new accession that is made to science. . . . . But there is enough of patent and palpable regularity in Nature to give also to the popular mind the same impression of her constancy. There is a gross and general experience that teaches the same lesson, and that has lodged in every bosom a kind of secure and steadfast confidence in the uniformity of her processes. The very child knows and proceeds upon it. He is aware of an abiding character and property in the elements around him, and has already learned as much of

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the fire, and the water, and the food that he eats, and the firm ground that he treads upon, and even of the gravitation by which he must regulate his postures and his movements, as to prove that, infant though he be, he is fully initiated in the doctrine, that Nature has her laws and her ordinances, and that she continueth therein, and the proofs of this are ever multiplying along the journey of human observation; insomuch that when we come to manhood, we read of Nature's constancy throughout every department of the visible world. It meets us wherever we turn our eyes. . . . . God has so framed the machinery of my perceptions, as that I am led irresistibly to expect that everywhere events will follow each other in the very train in which I have ever been accustomed to observe them; and when God so sustains the uniformity of Nature, that in every instance it is rigidly so, he is just manifesting the faithfulness of his character. Were it otherwise, he would be practising a mockery on the expectation which he himself had inspired. God may be said to have promised to every human being that Nature will be constant—if not by the whisper of an inward voice to every heart, at least by the force of an uncontrollable bias which he has impressed on every constitution. So that, when we behold Nature keeping up its constancy, we behold the God of Nature keeping up his faithfulness; and the system of visible things with its general laws, and its successions which are invariable, instead of an opaque materialism to intercept from the view of mortals the face of the Divinity, becomes the mirror which reflects upon the truth that is unchangeable, the ordination that never fails. . . . . And so it is, that in our text there are presented together, as if there was a tie of likeness between them—that the same God who is fixed as to the ordinances of Nature, is faithful as to the declarations of his word; and as all experience proves how firmly he may be trusted for the one, so is there an argument as strong as experience, to prove how firmly he may be trusted for the other. By his work in us he hath awakened the expectation of a constancy in Nature, which he never disappoints. By his word to us, should he awaken the expectation of a certainty in his declarations, this he will never disappoint. It is because Nature is so fixed, that we apprehend the God of Nature to be so faithful. He who never falsifies the hope that hath arisen in every bosom, from the instinct which he himself hath communicated, will never falsify the hope that shall arise in any bosom from the express utterance of his voice. Were he a God in whose hand the processes of nature were ever shifting, then might we conceive him a God from whose mouth the proclamations of grace had the like characters of variance and vacillation. But it is just because of our reliance on the one that we feel so much of repose in our dependence upon the other; and the same God who is so unfailing in the ordinances of his creation, we hold to be equally unfailing in the ordinances of his word. —*Thomas Chalmers.*

*Verse* 90.—"*Thy faithfulness is unto all generations.*" As he gathered the certainty of God's word from the endurance of heaven, so now he confirms it by considering the foundation of the earth. Since the foundation of the earth, made by the word of God, abides sure, shall we not think that the foundation of our salvation laid in Jesus Christ, is much more sure? Though the creatures cannot teach us the way of our salvation (for that we must learn by the word), yet do they confirm that which the word saith, "Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the LORD of hosts is his name: if those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever:" Jerem. xxxi. 35, 36. As there Jeremy gathers the stability of the church from the stability of the creatures; so here David confirms the certainty of our salvation by

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the most certain and unchangeable course of creation; and both of them are amplified by Christ Jesus: "Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot of God's word shall not fall to the ground." Let us therefore be strengthened in faith and give glory to God.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 90.—"*Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.*" Every time we set foot on the ground, we may remember the stability of God's promises, and it is also a confirmation of faith. Thus,—

1. The stability of the earth is the effect of God's word; this is the true pillar upon which the earth standeth; for he upholdeth all things by the word of his power; "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast": Ps. xxxiii. 9. Now, his word of power helpeth us to depend upon his word of promise.

2. Nothing appeareth whereon the globe of the earth should lean and rest: "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing:" Job xxvi. 7. Now, that this vast and ponderous body should lean upon the fluid air as upon a firm foundation, is matter of wonder; the question is put in the book of Job: "Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof?" ch. xxxviii. 6. Yet firm it is, though it hang as a ball in the air. . . . Now, since his word beareth up such a weight, and all the church's weight, and our own burden leaneth on the promise of God, he can, by the power of his word, bear up all without visible means. Therefore his people may trust his providence; he is able to support them in any distresses, when no way of help appeareth.

3. The firmness and stability offereth itself to our thoughts. The earth abideth in the same seat and condition wherein God left it, as long as the present course and order of nature is to continue: Ps. civ. 5. God's truth is as immovable as the earth: Ps. cxvii. 2. Surely if the foundation of the earth abideth sure, the foundation of our salvation, laid by Jesus Christ, is much more sure.

4. The stability remains in the midst of changes: Eccl. i. 4. All things in the world are subject to many revolutions, but God's truth is one and the same.

5. In upholding the frame of the world, all those attributes are seen, which are a firm stay to a believer's heart, such as wisdom, power, and goodness. The covenant of grace is as sure as the covenant made after the deluge. We cannot look upon this earth without seeing therein a display of those same attributes which confirm our faith, in waiting upon God till his promises be fulfilled to us.—*Condensed from T. Manton.*

*Verse* 90.—"*It abideth.*" Creation is as the mother, and Providence the nurse which preserveth all the works of God. God is not like man; for man, when he hath made a work, cannot maintain it: he buildeth a ship, and cannot save it from shipwreck; he edifies a house, but cannot keep it from decay. It is otherwise with God; we daily see his conserving power, upholding his creatures; which should confirm us that he will not cast us off, nor suffer us to perish (since we are the works of his hands) if we so depend upon him, and give him glory as our Creator, Conserver, and Redeemer. —*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 91.—"*They continue this day according to thine ordinances,*" etc. Which of the works of God are not pervaded by a beautiful *order?* Think of the succession of day and night. Think of the revolution of the seasons. Think of the stars as they walk in their majestic courses,—one great law of harmony "binding the sweet influence of the Pleiades, . . . . and guiding Arcturus with his sons": Job xxxviii. 31, 32. Look upwards, amid the magnificence of night, to that crowded concave,—worlds piled on worlds, —and yet see the calm grandeur of that stately march;—not a discordant note there to mar the harmony, though wheeling at an inconceivable velocity in their intricate and devious orbits! These heavenly sentinels all keep

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their appointed watch-towers. These Levites in the upper firmament, light their altar fires "at the time of the evening incense," and quench them again, when the sun, who is appointed to rule the day, walks forth from his chamber. "These wait all upon thee": Ps. civ. 27. "*They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.*"—*J. R. Macduff, in "Sunsets on the Hebrew Mountains,"* 1862.

*Verse* 91.—"*They continue this day according to thine ordinances.*" Man may destroy a plant, but he is powerless to force it into disobedience to the laws given it by the common Creator. "If," says one, "man would employ it for his use, he must carefully pay attention to its wants and ways, and bow his own proud will to the humblest grass at his feet. Man may forcibly obstruct the path of a growing twig, but it turns quietly aside, and moves patiently and irresistibly on its appointed way." Do what he may, turf will not grow in the tropics, nor the palm bear its fruit in a cold climate. Rice refuses to thrive out of watery swamps, or cotton to form its fleece of snowy fibres where the rain can reach them. Some of the handsomest flowers in the world, and stranger still, some of the most juicy and succulent plants with which we are acquainted, adorn the arid and desolate sands of the Cape of Good Hope, and will not flourish elsewhere. If you twist the branch of a tree so as to turn the under surface of its leaves towards the sky, in a very little while all those leaves will turn down and assume their appointed position. This process will be performed sooner or later, according to the heat of the sun and the flexibility of the leaves, but none the less it will surely take place. You cannot induce the Sorrowful tree of India to bloom by day, or cause it to cease all the year round from loading the night air with the rich perfume of its orange-like flowers. The philosopher need not go far to find the secret of this. The Psalmist declares it when, speaking of universal nature, he traces the true cause of its immutable order. God, he says, "hath established them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass;" or, as it is in the Prayer-book version, "hath given them a law which shall not be broken": Psalm cxlviii. 6. Truly is it said in another Psalm (cxix. 91), "*They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.*" Wilful man may dare to defy his Maker, and set at nought his wise and merciful commands; but not so all nature besides. Well, indeed, is it for us that his other works have not erred after the pattern of our rebellion; that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, with all their accompanying provision, have not ceased! To the precepts imposed upon vegetation when first called into being on creation's third day, it still yields implicit submission, and the tenderest plant will die rather than transgress. What an awful contrast to this is the conduct of man, God's noblest work, endowed with reason and a never-dying soul, yet too often ruining his health, wasting and destroying his mental power, defiling his immortal spirit, and, in a word, madly endeavouring to frustrate every purpose for which he was framed.—*James Neil, in "Rays from the Realms of Nature,"* 1879.

*Verse* 91.—All creatures punctually observe the law he hath implanted on their nature, and in their several capacities acknowledge him their sovereign; they move according to the inclinations he imprinted on them. The sea contains itself in its bounds, and the sun steps not out of his sphere; the stars march in their order: "*They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.*" If he orders things contrary to their primitive nature they obey him. When he speaks the word, the devouring fire becomes gentle, and toucheth not the hair of the children he will preserve; the hunger-starved lions suspend their ravenous nature when so good a morsel as Daniel is set before them; and the sun, which had been in perpetual motion since its creation, obeys the writ of ease God sent in Joshua's time, and stands still.—*Stephen Charnock.*

*Verse* 91.—"*All are thy servants.*" We should consider how great is that

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perversity by which man only, formed in the image of God, together with reprobate angels, has fallen away from obedience to God; so that what is said of all other creatures cannot be said of him, unless renewed by singular grace.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse* 91.—"*For all are thy servants.*" Since all creatures must serve God, therefore we ought neither to use them for any other purpose, nor turn them to the service of sin. The creature by the sin of our first parents has been made subject to vanity, and groans, and longs to be delivered, Rom. viii.: Christians, therefore, who use the creature and the world, should use as not abusing, 1 Cor. vii.; but enjoy them with praise of the divine majesty and goodness, 1 Tim. iv.—*Solomon Gesner.*

*Verse* 91.—"*All are thy servants.*"

Say not, my soul, "From whence
Can God relieve my care?
Remember that Omnipotence
Has servants everywhere.

*Thomas T. Lynch*, 1855.

*Verse* 92.—"*Unless thy law had been my delights,*" etc. This text sets out the great benefit and comfort which David found in the law of God in the time of his affliction. It kept him from perishing: "*Had not thy law been my delights, I had perished in my affliction*" . . . . David speaks this (saith Musculus) of the distressful condition he was in when persecuted by Saul, forced to fly to the Philistines, and sometimes to hide himself in the rocks and caves of the earth. It is very likely (saith he) that he had the book of God's law with him, by the reading of which he mitigated and allayed his sorrows, and kept himself pure from communicating with the heathen in their superstitions. The Greek scholiasts say that David uttered these words when driven from Saul, and compelled to live among the Philistines, etc. For he would have been allured to have communicated with them in their impieties had he not carried about him the meditation of the word of God.

The word of God delighted in is the afflicted saint's antidote against ruin and destruction. The word of God is the sick saint's salve, the dying saint's cordial, a precious medicine to keep God's people from perishing in time of affliction. This upheld Jacob from sinking, when his brother Esau came furiously marching to destroy him (Gen. xxxii. 12). He pleaded, "And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good," etc. Thus the promise of God supported him. This also upheld Joshua and enabled him courageously to fight the Lord's battles, because God had said, "He would never leave him nor forsake him" (Josh. i. 5). Melancthon saith that the Landgrave of Hesse told him at Dresden that it had been impossible for him to have borne up under the manifold miseries of so long an imprisonment, *Nisi habuisset consolationem verbo divino in suo corde*, but for the comfort of the Scriptures in his heart.—*Edmund Calamy* (1600—1666) *in* "*The Godly Man's Ark.*"

*Verse* 92.—Certainly the reading of most part of the Scriptures must needs be a very comfortable thing; and I think a godly heart (disposed as it ought to be) can hardly tell how to be sad while it does it. For what a comfort is it for a man to read an earthly father's letters sent to him, though they were written long ago? With what care do we keep such letters in our chests? With how much delight do we ever and anon take them out and look upon them? and with how much sorrow do we lose them? Is my love to my *earthly* father so great, and shall my love to my *heavenly* Father be less? Can my heart choose but rejoice and my bones flourish like an herb, as oft as I look upon my Redeemer's last will and testament, whereby I know that he gave me so much, and that he doth so much for me continually, and that I shall be ever with him.

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How is David ever and anon talking of his *delight in the law of God*, and in his statutes and testimonies. It was to him instead of all other delights; standing by him when all delights else left him; "*Unless thy law had been my delight* (or, *my very great delight*), *I should then have perished in mine affliction*," ver. 92. Let *princes sit and speak* against him never so much; yet will he meditate in God's statutes, ver. 23. Let him have never so many *persecutors and enemies;* yet will he not decline from God's testimonies, ver. 157. Let him be in a strange place, there shall God's statutes be his song, ver. 54. Let him be a *stranger in the earth* all his life; so that he be not a stranger to God's commandments he cares not, ver. 19. Although he should have never so much *contempt* cast upon him, yet will he not forget God's precepts, ver. 141. Although his *soul* should be *continually in his hand*, yet that should not make him forget God's law. Yea, although he became like *a bottle in the smoke*, yet will he not forget God's precepts, ver. 83. And therefore was it that he rejoiced, because he had been *afflicted* upon this account, that it made him learn God's statutes. He cared for no other *wealth*. "*Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart*," ver. 111. Neither cared he much for *life*, but only to keep God's word, vers. 17. Whatever he had said before, or meant to say next, he still cries, "*Teach me thy statutes*," and, "*I have longed for thy precepts*," &c.; or some such expression or other. He could not forbear to speak of them, for they were still before him, ver. 30. No wonder, then, that he meditated upon them so often, as he saith he did. "*O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day*," ver. 97. And "*Thy testimonies are my meditation*," ver. 99. God's commandments were to David sweeter in his mouth than honey, to talk and discourse of them, ver. 103.—*Zachary Bogan*, 1653.

*Verse* 92.—The persons to whose *delight* the word of God actually conduces are the children of God, and none else. None but they are prepared to take in the consolation of the word.

1. As they only are spiritually enlightened to discern the great and comfortable things contained in it, enlightened in a manner in which no others are: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14).

2. As they have the highest value for the word of God, this prepares them for receiving consolation from it.

3. As they have their hearts and ways suited to the word of God, this is another reason of the delight they fetch from it. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh," and take pleasure in them; "but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 5). The comforts of the word are spiritual; and only the spiritual heart, as it is renewed by grace, can taste and relish them. The delight which the people of God have from the word, is a privilege peculiar to themselves: and this word hath enough to give delight to all of their number.—*Daniel Wilcox*, 1676—1733.

*Verse* 92.—"*My delights.*" The word signifieth delights in the plural number. Many were the sorrows of David's life; but against them all he found as many comforts and delectations in God's word. With such variety of holy wisdom hath God penned his word, that it hath convenient comfort for every state of life, and therefore the children of God account nothing so dear as it; they prefer it to their appointed food.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 92.—"*Thy law . . my delights . . . . in mine affliction.*" I happened to be standing in a grocer's shop one day in a large manufacturing town in the west of Scotland, when a poor, old, frail widow came in to make a few purchases. There never was, perhaps, in that town a more severe time of distress. Nearly every loom was stopped. Decent and respectable tradesmen, who had seen better days, were obliged to subsist on public charity. So much money per day (but a trifle at most) was allowed

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to the really poor and deserving. The poor widow had received her daily pittance, and she had now come into the shop of the grocer to lay it out to the best advantage. She had but a few coppers in her withered hands. Carefully did she expend her little stock—a pennyworth of this and the other necessary of life nearly exhausted all she had. She came to the last penny, and with a singular expression of heroic contentment and cheerful resignation on her wrinkled face, she said, "Now I must buy oil with this, that I may see to read my Bible during these long dark nights, for it is my only comfort now when every other comfort has gone away."—*Alexander Wallace, in "The Bible and the Working Classes,"* 1853.

*Verse* 92.—This verse I may call a Perfume against the Plague; The Sick Man's Salve; The Afflicted Man's Consolation; and a blessed Triumph, in and over all troubles.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 93.—"*I will never forget thy precepts,*" etc. *Forgetfulness* must be striven against in every possible way, lest it should gradually creep in, through ingratitude, old age, weakness of mind, or other overwhelming cares. See verses 16, 61, 83.—*Martin Geier.*

*Verse* 93.—"*I will never forget thy precepts,*" etc. This afflicted good man is now comforted; his comfort came from his delight in God's law; he thinks of it, he feels the force of it, and therefore to the end that he might ever receive the like comforts, he will bind himself by a promise to the Lord that he will never forget his precepts; adding a reason, namely, that they were to him spirit and life.

"*With them hast thou quickened me.*" Quickened he was, as he saith, by God, but yet also by the word, soundly preached, savingly understood, and particularly applied to the conscience. Thus then doth the power of Christ's death make us to walk on in newness of life. No *aqua vitæ*, or *celestis* like unto this, by which we have inward peace of conscience, and an outward obedience to God's commandments. David rejoiced in this blessing, so ought we: we desire to be ever quick, and cheerful to all good duties; it is only God, by his Spirit, in the word, that can give it.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 93.—"*With them thou hast quickened me.*" The quickening Spirit delights to work by means of the word; but though the word be the means, yet the benefit comes from God: "For with them *thou* hast quickened me." Life comes from the fountain of life. The gospel is a sovereign plaster; but it is God's hand that must apply it, and make it stick; make it to be peace, comfort, and quickening to our souls. There is a double quickening, when, from dead, we are made living; or when, from cold, and sad, and heavy, we are made lively . . . . and so not only have life, but enjoy it more abundantly, according to Christ's gracious promise (John x. 10); that they may be living, lively, kept still in vigour. Now, this second quickening may be taken, either more largely, for the vitality of grace; or, strictly, for actual comfort. Largely taken; so God quickens by increasing the life of grace; either internally, by promising the life of grace; or morally and externally, by promising the life of glory. More strictly, his quickening may be taken for comfort and support in his affliction; so it is likely to be taken here: he had said immediately before, "Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction"; and now, "I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me." It was great comfort and support to him; and therefore he should prize the word as long as he lived.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 93.—"*Thou hast quickened me.*" Leave not off reading the Bible till you find your hearts warmed. Read the word, not only as a history, but labour to be affected with it. Let it not only inform you, but inflame you. "Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord": Jer. xxiii. 29. Go not from the word till you can say as those disciples, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" Luke xxiv. 32.—*Thomas Watson.*

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*Verse* 94.—"*I am thine, save me.*" David, a man after God's own heart, would be saved, but not after the manner of the men of this world, that would be saved to be their own and to enjoy themselves at their own will; but he in being saved would be God's, and at his disposing: "*I am thine, save me.*"

There is a threefold strength in this argument.

1. The *law of nature*, which obligeth a father to be good to his child, the husband to his wife, &c., and God hath subjected himself more unto the law of nature, he lies more under it, than any of these; and doth more perfectly, fully, and gloriously fulfil this law of nature than any; there is no father like him, no friend, no husband like him. "Can a woman forget her sucking child? yet will I not forget thee:" Isai. xlix. 15. A mother can hardly do it; nature teacheth her to have bowels, and a merciful remembrance towards her child; much more will I, saith God.

2. When we can say to God, "*I am thine,*" we plead *the covenant which God hath made with us*, wherein he is become our father and friend: and this is that which was pleaded in Isai. lxiii. 16: "Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not (because they are gone, and so have no cognizance of us now); yet thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting." See what a conclusion here is made; doubtless thou art our Father, and therefore we call to thee for help.

3. There is this encouragement and strength that the spirit of a man receives in thus arguing with God, *that if he can say in truth,* "*I am thine,*" *God much more will say to the creature,* "*I am thine.*" If we have so much love to offer ourselves to God, to become his; much more will the love of God make him to become ours; for God loves first, and most, and surest. If mine heart rise toward God, much more is the heart of God toward me; because there love is in the fountain. Never did a spouse speak to her husband, whom her soul loved to the highest, more willingly, and say, "*I am thine,*" than the spirit of an upright man saith to God, "*Lord, I am thine.*" And he loves him with a *love of thankfulness.* Hast thou given thyself to me, saith he, and shall I then withhold myself from thee? Hast thou, who art so great, done all this for me, and shall I stand out against thee? The gracious man will willingly acknowledge himself to be the Lord's. The saints often do this: David above twenty times comes with this acknowledgment in this psalm, and in Psalm cxvi. 16: "*I am thy servant; I am thy servant.*" To say it once was not enough; he saith it again, to show the sincerity of his spirit, and to witness that his heart was fully pleased with this, that he was not his own, but the Lord's. The knowledge of our interest in God doth much further our approaches to God. When a man is once assured, and can say with a clear spirit, "*I am thine,*" he will naturally cry, "*Save me.*" Such a man is a man of prayer, he is much in addresses to God, and conversing with him.—*Joseph Symonds*, 1653.

*Verse* 94.—"*I am thine.*" This is an excellent motive to draw from the Lord help in trouble,—"*I am thine.*" Thine by *creation*, I was made by thee; thine by *adoption*, I was assigned over to thee; thine by *donation*, I was given to thee; thine by *marriage*, I was espoused to thee; thine by *redemption*, I was purchased by thee; thine by *stipulation*, I have vowed myself unto thee.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 94.—"*For I have sought thy precepts.*" See here how David qualifies his protestation: from his earnest affection to the word of God, he proves that he was God's man and not his own servant. It is not words, but affections and actions which must prove us to be the Lord's. *Tuus sum, quia id solum quod tuum est quæsivi:* I am thine because I sought nothing but that which is thine, and how I might please thee. *Mihi in tuis justificationibus est omne patrimonium:* in the observance of thy precepts is all my patrimony.—*William Cowper.*



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*Verse* 95.—"*The wicked have waited for me to destroy me.*" Two things again he notes in his enemies; diligence, in waiting all occasions whereby to do him evil; and cruelty without mercy, for their purpose was to destroy him: wherein, still we see how restless and insatiable is the malice of the wicked against the godly. Daniel's preservation in the lions' den was a great miracle; but it is no less a marvellous work of God, that the godly who are the flock of Christ, are daily preserved in the midst of the wicked, who are but ravening wolves, and thirst for the blood of the saints of God, having a cruel purpose in their heart if they might perform it, utterly to destroy them.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 95.—"*But I will consider thy testimonies.*" It was a grievous temptation to be sought for to be given up to slaughter, but a greater mercy to consider God's testimonies, even then when his life was sought for. Had it not been for the consideration of God's testimonies, a thousand to one he had fallen away.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 96.—"*I have seen an end of all perfection,*" etc. These words are variously rendered and understood by interpreters, who in this variety do very much conspire and agree in the same sense. The *Chaldee* Paraphrase renders the words thus, "*I have seen an end of all things about which I have employed my care; but thy commandment is very large.*" The *Syriac* version thus, "*I have seen an end of all regions and countries*" (that is, I have found the compass of the habitable world to be finite and limited) "*but thy commandment is of a vast extent.*" Others explain it thus, "*I have seen an end of all perfection,*" that is, of all the things of this world which men value and esteem at so high a rate; of all worldly wisdom and knowledge, of wealth, and honour, and greatness, which do all perish and pass away; "*but thy law is eternal, and still abideth the same*"; or, as the Scripture elsewhere expresses it, "The word of the Lord endureth for ever."—*John Tillotson*, 1630—1694.

*Verse* 96.—"*I have seen an end of all perfection.*" Poor perfection which one sees an end of! Yet such are all those things in this world which pass for perfections. David in his time had seen Goliath, the strongest, overcome; Asahel, the swiftest, overtaken; Ahithophel, the wisest, befooled; Absalom, the fairest, deformed.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 96.—"*I have seen an end of all perfection,*" etc. The Psalmist's words offer us a double comfort and encouragement. We may read them in two ways: (1) "I have seen an end of all perfection; *for* thy commandment is exceeding broad"; and (2) "I have seen an end of all perfection, *but* thy commandment is exceeding broad."

Read in the first way, they suggest the animating thought, that our haunting consciousness of imperfection springs from the bright and awful perfection of the Law we are bent on obeying, of the ideal we have set before us. It is not because we are worse than those who are without law, or who are a law unto themselves, that we are restless and dissatisfied with ourselves; but because we measure both ourselves and our fellows by the lofty standard of God's commandment. It is because that commandment is so broad, that we cannot embrace it; it is because it is so high, that we cannot attain to it; it is because it is so perfect, that we cannot perfectly obey it.

But we may read the verse in another way, and still derive comfort and encouragement from it. We may say: "I have seen an end of all perfection in myself, and in the world; *but* thy commandment is exceeding broad: *that* is perfect, though *I* am imperfect, and in its perfection I find the promise of my own." For shall God give a law for human life, and that law remain for ever unfulfilled? Impossible! "The gifts of God are without repentance"—irreversible, never to be lessened or withdrawn. His purpose is not to be made of none effect by our weaknesses and sins. In the Law he

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has shown us what he would have us to be. And shall we never become what he would have us to be? Can the Law remain for ever without any life that corresponds to it and fulfils it? Nay, God will never take back the fair and perfect ideal of human life depicted in his Law, never retract his purpose to raise the life of man till it touches and fulfils its ideal. And so the very Law which is our despair is our comfort also; for if *that* be perfect *we* must become perfect; its perfection is the pledge of ours.—*From "The Expositor,"* 1876.

*Verse* 96.—"*I have seen an end of all perfection.*" David's natural eye had seen the end of many human perfections, and the eye of his understanding saw the end of them all. He had seen some actually end, and he saw that all must end. Adam did not continue in that perfection which had no imperfection in it; how then shall any of his children continue in what is at best an imperfect perfection?—*Abraham Wright.*

*Verse* 96.—"*I have seen an end,*" etc. The laws of Lycurgus among the Grecians, and of Numa among the Romans, had somewhat of good in them, but not all; prohibited somewhat that was evil, but not all that was evil. But the Christian religion is of a larger extent, both in its precepts and prohibitions: "*I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*" A man with the eye of his body may behold an end of many worldly perfections, of many fair estates, great beauties, large parts, hopeful families; but a man with the eye of his soul (or by faith) may see an end of all earthly perfections. He may see the world in a flame, and all its pomp and pride, and glory, and gallantry, and crowns and sceptres, and riches, and treasures, turned into ashes. He may see the heavens passing away like a scroll, and the elements melting with fervent heat, and the earth, with the things thereon, consumed; and all its perfections, which men doated so much on, vanished into smoke and nothing. It is easy to see to the end of all terrene perfections, but it is difficult, yea, impossible, to see to the end of divine precepts: "*But thy commandments are exceeding broad,*" of a vast latitude, beyond our apprehension. They are so deep that none can fathom them, Ps. xxxvi. 6, so high that they are established in heaven, Ps. cxix. 48; so long that they endure for ever, 2 Pet. i.; and so broad, that none can measure them. They are not only "*broad,*" but "*exceeding* broad": higher than heaven, longer than the earth, broader than the sea." The commands of God reach the inward parts, the most secret motions and retired recesses of the soul. They reach all the privy thoughts, they pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, Heb. iv. 12. They reach to all our actions; to those that seem smallest and of less concernment, as well as to those that are greater and of more concernment.—*George Swinnock.*

*Verse* 96.—"*Thy commandment is exceeding broad.*" As there is more mercy in the gospel than we are able to comprehend, so there is more holiness in the law than we are able to comprehend. No man ever saw into the depths of that righteousness. There is an infinite holiness in the law. "*I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*" He speaks not in the concrete, I have seen an end of *perfect things*, but in the abstract, "an end of *perfection*," I have come to the outside or to the very bottom of all (a man may soon travel through all the perfections that are in the world, and either see their end, or see that they end); "*but thy commandment is exceeding broad,*" that is, it is exceedingly broader than any of these perfections; I cannot see the end of it, and I know it shall never have an end. There is a vastness of purity and spiritualness in the law.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse* 96.—"*Thy commandment is exceeding broad.*" It is so by the comprehensive applicableness of its grand, simple rules. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and thy neighbour

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as thyself." It is so by the ample order of its special injunctions. Where is there a spot without a signal of the divine will? It is so by laying an authoritative hand on the first principles and origin from which any thing can proceed, in human spirit and action; then it reaches to all things that do or can proceed thence. It asserts a jurisdiction over all thought and inward affection. All language is uttered under this same jurisdiction. All that the world and each man is in action about. And even over what is not done it maintains its authority, and pronounces its dictates and judgments. It is a positive thing with respect to what is negative, omission, non-existence. Like the divine government in the material world, over the wastes, deserts, and barren sands. And from these spaces of nothing (as it were) it can raise up substantial forms of evil, of sin, in evidence against men. As at the resurrection men will rise from empty wastes, where it would not have been suspected that any were concealed. Let a man look back on all his omissions, and think what the divine law can raise from them against him. Thus the law in its exceeding breadth, is vacant nowhere; it is not stretched to this wide extent by chasms and void spaces. If a man could find one such, he might there take his position for sin with impunity, if not with innocence.—*John Foster*, 1768—1843.

*Verse* 96.—"*Thy commandment is exceeding broad.*" In the popular religious literature of the present times, the terms "broad" and "free" are of frequent occurrence. The fascination that surrounds them is enhanced by the use, at the same time, of their opposites, "narrow" and "bigoted." By an adroit manipulation of these terms and their equivalents, the heterodoxy of the day is labouring to stamp out the doctrine and spirit of the evangelical faith, and to allure the Christian multitude within the influence of the spreading rationalistic drift. Going to the market where the heterodox wares are exhibited with labels so attractive, the unsuspecting purchaser soon discovers that "their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter." Is the time not come when the adherents of the true faith should make an effort to wrest from their opponents the monopoly in the use of these terms, which they seem desirous of establishing for themselves? Those who, in the spirit of their Master, abide most closely by, and contend most tenaciously for, the whole faith that has been delivered to the saints, must be the most liberal-minded and catholic; and those who forsake the "old paths" must, in proportion to the extent of their departures, become contracted in their mental grasp, and narrow in their soul. Is not the Bible—the whole Bible—the only manual of Broad-churchism in its truest and highest sense? Is not the revelation of God's Son in us, the great soul-expanding power? "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Must we not infer, from the words of Christ, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," that the mind which apprehends the truth is a home of mental liberty? Does not strict conformity of the life to God's law produce real breadth of character? For "*Thy commandment is exceeding broad.*" Is not the gospel system the only true Broad-churchism—"the perfect law of liberty"? Is not the believer—and the more so in proportion to the strength of his faith—the only true Broad-churchman, "increasing with the increase of God," "filled with all the fulness of God"?—*James Kerr, in* "*The Modern Scottish Pulpit*," 1880.

*Verse* 96.—"*Exceeding broad.*" Notwithstanding many things do show the way of life to be narrow, yet unto the godly man it is a way of great breadth; though not for sin, yet for duty and delight. He makes haste and progress in it.—*Robert Trail*, 1642—1716.

*Verse* 96.—Take notice that the law, which is your mark, is *exceeding broad.* And yet not the more easy to be hit; because you must aim to hit it, in every duty of it, with a performance of equal breadth, or else you cannot hit it at all.—*Stephen Marshall.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 97 TO 104.

O HOW love I thy law ! it *is* my meditation all the day.

98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they *are* ever with me.

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies *are* my meditation.

100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

102 I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste ! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth !

104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

97. "*O how love I thy law!*" It is a note of exclamation. He loves so much that he must express his love, and in making the attempt he perceives that it is inexpressible—and therefore cries, "O how I love!" We not only reverence but love the law, we obey it out of love, and even when it chides us for disobedience we love it none the less. The law is God's law, and therefore it is our love. We love it for its holiness, and pine to be holy; we love it for its wisdom, and study to be wise; we love it for its perfection, and long to be perfect. Those who know the power of the gospel perceive an infinite loveliness in the law as they see it fulfilled and embodied in Christ Jesus. "*It is my meditation all the day.*" This was both the effect of his love and the cause of it. He meditated in God's word because he loved it, and then loved it the more because he meditated in it. He could not have enough of it, so ardently did he love it: all the day was not too long for his converse with it. His matin prayer, his noonday thought, his even-song were all out of Holy Writ; yea, in his worldly business he still kept his mind saturated with the law of the Lord. It is said of some men that the more you know them the less you admire them; but the reverse is true of God's word. Familiarity with the word of God breeds affection, and affection seeks yet greater familiarity. When "thy law," and "my meditation" are together all the day, the day grows holy, devout, and happy, and the heart lives with God. David turned away from all else; for in the preceding verse he tells us that he had seen an end of all perfection; but he turned in unto the law and tarried there the whole day of his life on earth, growing henceforth wiser and holier.

98. "*Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies.*" The commands were his book, but God was his teacher. The letter can make us knowing, but only the divine Spirit can make us wise. Wisdom is knowledge put to practical use. Wisdom comes to us through obedience: "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine." We learn not only from promise, and doctrine, and sacred history, but also from precept and command; in fact, from the commandments we gather the most practical wisdom, and that which enables us best to cope with our adversaries. A holy life is the highest wisdom and the surest defence. Our enemies are renowned for subtlety, from the first father of them, the old serpent, down to the last cockatrice that has been hatched from the egg;

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and it would be vain for us to try to be a match with them in the craft and mystery of cunning, for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. We must go to another school and learn of a different instructor, and then by uprightness we shall baffle fraud, by simple truth we shall vanquish deep-laid scheming, and by open candour we shall defeat slander. A thoroughly straightforward man, devoid of all policy, is a terrible puzzle to diplomatists; they suspect him of a subtle duplicity through which they cannot see, while he, indifferent to their suspicions, holds on the even tenor of his way, and baffles all their arts. Yes, "honesty is the best policy." He who is taught of God has a practical wisdom such as malice cannot supply to the crafty; while harmless as a dove he also exhibits more than a serpent's wisdom.

"*For they are ever with me.*" He was always studying or obeying the commandments; they were his choice and constant companions. If we wish to become proficient we must be indefatigable. If we keep the wise law ever near us we shall become wise, and when our adversaries assail us we shall be prepared for them with that ready wit which lies in having the word of God at our fingers' ends. As a soldier in battle must never lay aside his shield, so must we never have the word of God out of our minds; it must be ever with us.

99. "*I have more understanding than all my teachers.*" That which the Lord had taught him had been useful in the camp, and now he finds it equally valuable in the schools. Our teachers are not always to be trusted; in fact, we may not follow any of them implicitly, for God holds us to account for our personal judgments. It behoves us then to follow closely the chart of the Word of God, that we may be able to save the vessel when even the pilot errs. If our teachers should be in all things sound and safe, they will be right glad for us to excel them, and they will ever be ready to own that the teaching of the Lord is better than any teaching which they can give us. Disciples of Christ who sit at his feet are often better skilled in divine things than doctors of divinity. "*For thy testimonies are my meditation.*" This is the best mode of acquiring understanding. We may hear the wisest teachers and remain fools, but if we meditate upon the sacred word we must become wise. There is more wisdom in the testimonies of the Lord than in all the teachings of men if they were all gathered into one vast library. The one book outweighs all the rest.

David does not hesitate to speak the truth in this place concerning himself, for he is quite innocent of self-consciousness. In speaking of his understanding he means to extol the law and the Lord, and not himself. There is not a grain of boasting in these bold expressions, but only a sincere childlike desire to set forth the excellence of the Lord's word. He who knows the truths taught in the Bible will be guilty of no egotism if he believes himself to be possessed of more important truth than all the agnostic professors buried and unburied.

100. "*I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.*" The men of old age, and the men of old time, were outdone by the holier and more youthful learner. He had been taught to observe in heart and life the precepts of the Lord, and this was more than the most venerable sinner had ever learned, more than the philosopher of antiquity had so much as aspired to know. He had the word with him, and so outstripped his foes; he meditated on it, and so outran his friends; he practised it, and so outshone his elders. The instruction derived from Holy Scripture is useful in many directions, superior from many points of view, unrivalled everywhere and in every way. As our soul may make her boast in the Lord, so may we boast in his word. "There is none like it: give it me," said David as to Goliath's sword, and we may say the same as to the word of the Lord. If men prize antiquity they have it here. The ancients are had in high repute, but what did they all know compared with that which we perceive in the divine

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precepts? "The old is better" says one: but the oldest of all is the best of all, and what is that but the word of the Ancient of days?

101. "*I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.*" There is no treasuring up the holy word unless there is a casting out of all unholiness: if we keep the good word we must let go the evil. David had zealously watched his steps and put a check upon his conduct,—he had refrained his feet. No one evil way could entice him, for he knew that if he went astray but in one road he had practically left the way of righteousness, therefore he avoided every false way. The by-paths were smooth and flowery, but he knew right well that they were evil, and so he turned his feet away, and held on along the strait and thorny pathway which leads to God. It is a pleasure to look back upon self-conquests,—"I have refrained," and a greater delight still to know that we did this out of no mere desire to stand well with our fellows, but with the one motive of keeping the law of the Lord. Sin avoided that obedience may be perfected is the essence of this verse; or it may be that the Psalmist would teach us that there is no real reverence for the book where there is not carefulness to avoid every transgression of its precepts. How can we keep God's word if we do not keep our own works from becoming vile?

102. "*I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.*" They are well taught whom God teaches. What we learn from the Lord we never forget. God's instruction has a practical effect,—we follow his way when he teaches us; and it has an abiding effect,—we do not depart from holiness. Read this verse in connection with the preceding and you get the believer's "I have," and his "I have not": he is good both positively and negatively. What he did, namely, "refrained his feet," preserved him from doing that which otherwise he might have done, namely, "departed from thy judgments." He who is careful not to go an inch aside will not leave the road. He who never touches the intoxicating cup will never be drunk. He who never utters an idle word will never be profane. If we begin to depart a little we can never tell where we shall end. The Lord brings us to persevere in holiness by abstinence from the beginning of sin; but whatever be the method he is the worker of our perseverance, and to him be all the glory.

103. "*How sweet are thy words unto my taste!*" He had not only heard the words of God, but fed upon them: they affected his palate as well as his ear. God's words are many and varied, and the whole of them make up what we call "the word": David loved them each one, individually, and the whole of them as a whole; he tasted an indescribable sweetness in them. He expresses the fact of their sweetness, but as he cannot express the degree of their sweetness he cries, "How sweet!" Being God's words they were divinely sweet to God's servant; he who put the sweetness into them had prepared the taste of his servant to discern and enjoy it. David makes no distinction between promises and precepts, doctrines and threatenings; they are all included in God's words, and all are precious in his esteem. Oh for a deep love to all that the Lord has revealed, whatever form it may take.

"*Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.*" When he did not only eat but also speak the word, by instructing others, he felt an increased delight in it. The sweetest of all temporal things fall short of the infinite deliciousness of the eternal word: honey itself is outstripped in sweetness by the word of the Lord. When the Psalmist fed on it he found it sweet; but when he bore witness of it it became sweeter still. How wise it will be on our part to keep the word on our palate by meditation and on our tongue by confession. It must be sweet to our taste when we think of it, or it will not be sweet to our mouth when we talk of it.

104. "*Through thy precepts I get understanding.*" God's direction is our instruction. Obedience to the divine will begets wisdom of mind and

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action. As God's way is always best, those who follow it are sure to be justified by the result. If the Lawgiver were foolish his law would be the same, and obedience to such a law would involve us in a thousand mistakes; but as the reverse is the case, we may count ourselves happy to have such a wise, prudent, and beneficial law to be the rule of our lives. We are wise if we obey and we grow wise by obeying!

"*Therefore I hate every false way.*" Because he had understanding, and because of the divine precepts, he detested sin and falsehood. Every sin is a falsehood; we commit sin because we believe a lie, and in the end the flattering evil turns a liar to us and we find ourselves betrayed. True hearts are not indifferent about falsehood, they grow warm in indignation: as they love the truth, so they hate the lie. Saints have a universal horror of all that is untrue, they tolerate no falsehood or folly, they set their faces against all error of doctrine or wickedness of life. He who is a lover of one sin is in league with the whole army of sins; we must have neither truce nor parley with even one of these Amalekites, for the Lord hath war with them from generation to generation, and so must we. It is well to be a good hater. And what is that? A hater of no living being, but a hater of "every false way." The way of self-will, of self-righteousness, of worldliness, of pride, of unbelief, of hypocrisy,—these are all false ways, and therefore not only to be shunned, but to be abhorred.

This final verse of the strophe marks a great advance in character, and shows that the man of God is growing stronger, bolder, and happier than aforetime. He has been taught of the Lord, so that he discerns between the precious and the vile, and while he loves the truth fervently he hates falsehood intensely. May all of us reach this state of discrimination and determination, so that we may greatly glorify God.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 97 TO 104.

*Verse* 97.—"*O how love I thy law!*" He speaketh not of his knowing, reading, hearing, speaking, or outward practising of the law, but of *love* to the law: this is more than all the former: all the former may be without this, but this cannot be without the former. We may know, read, hear, speak, yea, preach the law, and all God's word, as also outwardly perform outward works prescribed and commanded by the law, and yet not love it; but where this love is there cannot but be all the former. Love is the principal affection of all other; like a queen commanding and overruling all the rest: all the rest depend upon it; yea, sometimes also the judgment itself. As the love is set, whether rightly or wrongly, towards good or evil, so are all the affections swayed; yea, judgment itself sometimes blinded by love, erreth, as the love itself erreth; and so words and all actions are accordingly. Doth not daily experience daily teach the truth hereof? Moreover, besides this observation of this word, in respect of other, and in a kind of opposition unto other; let us observe two other things therein: 1. The first person; 2. The present tense. He saith not, O how is thy word to be loved, namely, by others; but O, how do *I myself* love thy law or thy word! Neither doth he say, O, how have I loved thy law in times past, or, how will I love it hereafter, how unfeignedly do I purpose to love it, when I shall be advanced unto and settled in my kingdom; or, how would I love it if I were so advanced and settled, or were I in this or that estate, or had this or that which I yet have not, or that others have; the prophet, I say, speaketh not in such manner; but he speaketh, as in the first person, so also in the present tense, saying, O how do I (now, such as I am) love thy law! Both these things are very worthy of our observation, and they be the greater in respect of the person of the prophet; for albeit the name of the writer of this psalm be not expressed in the title thereof (as in many other psalms), yet the stream of most interpreters carrieth it to David. The matter also and style of the psalm, compared with the matter and style of other psalms which are David's, do both savour of David, and argue it was written by David . . . . . Whether David were now in full and quiet possession of his kingdom, (though not without many adversaries), or whether he was only known to be the heir-apparent, appointed to succeed Saul (as most do think), or whether he were for a time in flight from the cruel and rebellious insurrection of his unnatural son Absalom, yet is it a great matter that here he speaketh of his great love towards the law of God. If he were in full and quiet possession of his kingdom, then had he many other things that he might have loved, and wherewith the hearts of such princes are commonly taken up, yea, also stolen away from those things that are much more worthy of love. What need I speak of the daily experience, whereby the truth hereof is manifest in far more mean persons than princes are? If David were in exile or flight, a man would think that his wife and children, and other friends, as also his country, would have so occupied and fully possessed his heart, that there should have been little place for other things therein; but that rather he should have said, Oh, how love I those things! Oh, how is my heart troubled with thoughts of them, and care for them in my great love towards them! Moreover, that neither any troubles on the one side, wherewith David was continually exercised; nor his honours, riches, or pleasures, either in possession or in hope on the other side, did extinguish, or cool, or abate his love, is it not a thing of great note?

The next word to be observed is that word "*how*": "Oh *how* love I thy law!" This noteth the manner or measure of his love. It is a word of admiration, or a note of comparison; so is it taken in divers other places . . . . . it noteth a kind of excess or excellency, even such as cannot be well expressed. The prophet seemeth to speak with a kind of sighing, as being so ravished with love towards the law of God, that he was

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even sick of love, as the church saith (Cant. ii. 5; v. 8), she was sick of love towards Christ: so seemeth the prophet to be sick of love towards the word of God. This word "*how*," also importeth a comparison, and noteth a greater love in David towards the word than towards riches or any other thing; in which respect he saith afterward in this very Psalm (ver. 127), that he loveth the Lord's commandments "above gold, yea, above fine gold"; yea, as whosoever so loveth not Christ, that in respect of Christ, and for Christ's sake, he forsaketh father, and mother, and brethren, and sisters, wife and children, and his own life also (much more riches and other things not to be compared to life) is not worthy of him: so he that doth not love the word above all other things; yea, he that hateth not all other things below here, in respect of the word, is not worthy of the word. Christ himself loved the word of God more than he loved any riches; for did he not for the performance of the word submit himself to such want, that the foxes had holes, and the birds had nests, but he had not whereon to lay his head? and that, although he were the heir of all things, yet he was ministered unto by certain women? He loved the word of God more than he loved his mother, brethren, and sisters . . . . . Yea, Christ loved the word of God more than he loved his own life; for did he not lay down his life to fulfil the word of God? . . . . If Christ Jesus himself loved the word more than all other things, yea, more than his life, which was more than the life of all angels, was there not great reason why David should love it in like manner? had not David as much need of it as Christ? . . . .

"*It is my meditation.*" The noun "*meditation*" seemeth to be more than if he had said only that he meditated. For he seemeth to mean that though he did often think upon other matters, yet he made nothing his "meditation" but that which he here speaketh of, and that this was his only, or his chief and principal meditation and set study.

The object of David's meditation is not only to be understood of the bare letter of the word, as if he did always meditate of some text or other of the word before written; but also of the matters contained in the word; as of the justice, power, wisdom, mercy and goodness of God; of the frailty, corruption, and wickedness that is in man naturally, of the sins that God forbiddeth, and of the virtues that God commandeth in the word, and other the like. For he that meditateth of these things, though he meditate not of any one text of the word, yet he may be truly said to meditate of the word.

"*All the day.*" We are not to imagine that the prophet did nothing else but meditate on the word; but this, first of all; that no day passed over his head wherein he did not meditate on the word; yea, that he took every occasion of meditating on the word. He was never weary of meditating. Though he had many other things wherein to employ himself, yet he forgot not the meditation of the word. His mind was not by any other employment alienated from the meditation of the word, but the more thereby provoked thereunto. As a man that hath laboured never so much one day in his calling, is not to be wearied thereby, but that he laboureth afresh the next day, and so day after day: so was it with the prophet touching this act of meditation. Secondly, when he saith he meditated on the word continually, or all the day, he meaneth that he did nothing at any time of the day without meditation on the word for doing thereof. Therefore we may safely say that continual meditation of the word is more necessary than continual praying, as being necessary before the doing of everything, and in the very doing of everything; yea, even before the said duty of prayer, and in the very act thereof, this work of meditation of the word is always necessary; as without which, we know not either for what to pray, or in what sort and manner to pray: it is God's word only that can and must teach us both what to pray for and also how to pray.—*Thomas Stoughton, in "Two Profitable Treatises,"* 1616.

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*Verse* 97.—"*O how love I thy law!*" Who without love attempts anything in the law of God, does it coldly, and quickly gives it up. For the mind cannot give itself earnestly and perseveringly to things which are not loved. Only he who loves the law makes it his meditation all the day.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse* 97.—"*O how love I thy law!*" Were I to enjoy Hezekiah's grant, and to have fifteen years added to my life, I would be much more frequent in my applications to the throne of grace. Were I to renew my studies, I would take my leave of those accomplished trifles — the historians, the orators, the poets of antiquity — and devote my attention to the Scriptures of truth. I would sit with much greater assiduity at my Divine Master's feet, and desire to know nothing but "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." This wisdom, whose fruits are peace in life, consolation in death, and everlasting salvation after death—this I would trace—this I would seek—this I would explore through the spacious and delightful fields of the Old and New Testament.—*James Hervey*, 1714—1758.

*Verse* 97.—This most precious jewel is to be preferred above all treasure. If thou be hungry, it is meat to satisfy thee; if thou be thirsty, it is drink to refresh thee; if thou be sick, it is a present remedy; if thou be weak, it is a staff to lean unto; if thine enemy assault thee, it is a sword to fight withal; if thou be in darkness, it is a lanthorn to guide thy feet; if thou be doubtful of the way, it is a bright shining star to direct thee; if thou be in displeasure with God, it is the message of reconciliation; if thou study to save thy soul, receive the word engrafted, for that is able to do it: it is the word of life. Whoso loveth salvation will love this word, love to read it, love to hear it; and such as will neither read nor hear it, Christ saith plainly, they are not of God. For the spouse gladly heareth the voice of the bridegroom; and "my sheep hear my voice," saith the Prince of pastors (John x. 27).—*Edwin Sandys*, 1519—1587.

*Verse* 97.—"*O how love I thy law!*" As faith worketh by love unto God, so it worketh by love unto his word. Love me, love my word: love a king, love his laws. So it did on David; so it should do on us: "O how love I thy law!" saith David. "*O how love I thy law!*" should every one of us say; not only because it is a good law, but chiefly because it is God's law.—*Richard Capel*, 1586—1656.

*Verse* 97.—"*O how love I thy law!*" He calls God himself to be judge of his love to the word; witnessing thereby that it was no counterfeit love, but complete and sincere love which he bore unto it. The like protestation was used by S. Peter: "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I love thee!"—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 97.—"*Thy law.*" In every one of these eight verses the Bible is spoken of as the Lord's, as, indeed, all through the Psalm. Who is the author of Scripture? God. What is the matter of Scripture? God; it was not fit that any should write of God, but God himself. What is the end of Scripture? God. Why was the Scripture written, but that we might everlastingly enjoy the blessed God? As Cæsar wrote his own commentaries; so God, when there was none above him of whom he could write, he wrote of himself; by histories, laws, prophecies, and promises, and many other doctrines, hath he set himself forth to be the Creator, Preserver, Deliverer, and Glorifier of mankind; and all this is done in a perfect manner.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 97.—"*It is my meditation.*" Holy Scripture is not a book for the slothful; it is not a book which can be interpreted without, and apart from, and by the deniers of, that Holy Spirit by whom it came. Rather is it a field, upon the surface of which, if sometimes we gather manna easily and without labour, and given, as it were, freely to our hands, yet of which also, many portions are to be cultivated with pains and toil ere they will yield food for the use of man. This bread of life also is

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to be eaten in the wholesome sweat of our brow.—*Richard Chenevix Trench*, 1807—.

*Verse* 98.—"*Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies.*" Now he praiseth the word for the singular profit and fruit which he reaped by it; to wit, that he learned wisdom by it. And this he amplifies, by comparing himself with three sorts of men; his enemies, his teachers, and the ancients. And this he doth, not of vain glory (for bragging is far from him who is governed by the Spirit of grace); but to commend the word of the Lord, and to allure others to love it, by declaring to them what manifold good he found in it.

"*Wiser than mine enemies.*" But how can this be, seeing that our Saviour saith that the men of this world are wiser in their own generation than the children of God? The answer is, our Saviour doth not call worldlings wise men simply; but *wiser in their own generation;* that is, wise in things pertaining to this life. Or as Jeremy calls them, "wise to do evil"; and when they have so done, wise to conceal and cloak it. All which in very deed is but folly; and therefore David, who by the light of God's word saw that it was so, could not be moved to follow their course. Well; there is a great controversy between the godly and the wicked: either of them in their judgment accounts the other to be fools; but it is the light of God's word which must decide it.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 98.—"*Wiser than mine enemies.*" They are wiser than their enemies as to security against their attempts, and that enmity and opposition that they carry on against them; they are far more safe by walking under the covert of God's protection than their enemies can possibly be, who have all manner of worldly advantages. A godly-wise man is careful to keep in with God: he is more prepared and furnished, can have a higher hope, more expectation of success, than others have; or, if not, he is well enough provided for, though all things fall out never so cross to his desires. As to success, who hath made wiser provision, think you, he that hath made God his friend, or he that is borne up with worldly props and dependences? they that are guided by the Spirit of God, or they that are guided by Satan? those that make it their business to walk with God step by step, or those that not only forsake him, but provoke him to his face? those that break with men, and keep in with God, or those that break with God? Surely, a child of God hath more security by piety than his enemies can have by secular policy, whereby they think to overreach and ruin him. The safety of a child of God lieth in two things: 1. God is his friend. 2. As long as God hath work for him to do, he will maintain him, and bear him out in it. —*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 98.—"*They are ever with me.*" The meaning of the last clause is not merely, "*it is ever with me,*" but "*it is for ever to me,*" i.e., mine, my inalienable, indefeasible possession.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verse* 98.—"*They are ever with me.*" God gives knowledge to whom he pleaseth; but those that meditate most, thrive most. This may imply also that the word should be a ready help. Such as derive their wisdom from without cannot have their counsellers always with them to give advice. But, when a man hath gotten the word in his heart, he finds a ready help: he hath a seasonable word to direct him in all difficulties, in all straits, and in all temptations, to teach him what to do against the burden of the present exigence; to teach him what to do and what to hope for.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 98.—"*They are ever with me.*" A good man, wherever he goes, carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verses* 98, 99, 100.—Three sorts of men he mentioneth, "*enemies,*" "*teachers,*" "*ancients*"; the enemies excel in policy, teachers in doctrine, and ancients in counsel; and yet by the word was David made wiser than all these. Malice sharpens the wit of enemies, and teacheth them the arts

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of opposition; teachers are furnished with learning because of their office; and ancients grow wise by experience; yet David, by the study of the word, excelled all these.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 99.—"*I have more understanding than all my teachers.*" Even where the preacher is godly, partaker of that grace himself, whereof he is an ambassador to others, it falls out oftentimes that greater measure of light and grace is communicated by his ministry to another than is given to himself; as Augustine first illuminated and converted by Ambrose did far excel, both in knowledge and spiritual grace, him that taught him. And herein God wonderfully shows his glory, that, whosoever be the instrument, he is the dispenser of light and glory, giving more by the instrument than it hath in itself. And this is so far from being to a godly teacher a matter of grief, that it is rather a matter of glory.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 99.—"*I have more understanding than all my teachers.*" It is no reflection upon my teachers, but rather an honour to them, for me to improve so as to excel them, and no longer to need them. By *meditation* we preach to ourselves, and so we come to *understand more than our teachers*, for we come to understand our hearts, which they cannot.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 100.—"*I understand . . . because I keep.*" Would we know the Lord? let us keep his commandments. "By thy precepts," saith David, that is, by the observance of thy precepts, "I get understanding." "If any man do my will" (saith our blessed Saviour, John vii. 17), "he shall know my doctrine." Βούλει θεόλογος γενέσθαι? τὰς ἐντολὰς φύλασσε, saith Nazienzen: Wouldst thou be a divine? do the commandments; for action is (as it were) the basis of contemplation. It is St. Gregory's observation concerning the two disciples who, whilst Christ talked with them, knew him not; but in performing an act of hospitality towards him, to wit, breaking bread with him, they knew him, that they were enlightened, not by hearing him, but by doing divine precepts, *Quisquis ergo vult audita intelligere; festinet ea quæ jam audire potuit, opere implere*, Whosoever therefore will understand, let him first make haste to do what he heareth.—*Nathanael Hardy*, 1618—1670.

*Verse* 100.—"*I understand more than the ancients.*" The ordinary answer of ignorant people is, "What! must we be wiser than our forefathers?" And yet those same people would be richer than their forefathers were. The *maximum quod sic* of a Christian is this,—he must grow in grace, till his head reach up to heaven, till grace is perfected in glory.—*Christopher Love*, 1618—1651.

*Verse* 100.—"*More than the ancients.*" Understanding gotten by the precepts of the word is better than understanding gotten by long experience. It is better in four regards. First, It is *more exact.* Our experience reacheth but to a few things; but the word of God reacheth to all cases that concern true happiness. The word is the result of God's wisdom, who is the Ancient of days; therefore exceeds the wisdom of the ancients, or experience of any men, or all men. Secondly, as it is more exact, so a *more sure* way of learning wisdom, whereas experience is more uncertain. Many have much experience, yet have not a heart to see and to gather wisdom from what they feel: Deut. xxix. 2—4. Thirdly, It is a *safer and cheaper* way of learning, to learn by rule, than to come home by weeping cross, and to learn wisdom by our own smart. Experience is too expensive a way; and, if we had nothing else to guide us, into how many thousand miseries should we run? Fourthly, It is *shorter.* The way by age and experience is a long way; and so, for a long time, all a man's younger age must needs be miserable and foolish. Now, here you may come betimes to be wise by studying the word of God. It concerns a man, not only to be wise at length, but to be wise betimes. The foolish virgins were wise too late; but never were any wise too soon.—*Condensed from Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 100.—If this way [the Word of God] were thus perfect in David's

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time, what is it by the addition of so many parcels of Scripture since? If it then gave wisdom to the simple (Ps. xix. 7); if it made David, being brought up but as a shepherd, *wiser than* his enemies, than *his ancients*, than his teachers; as an angel of God in discerning right from wrong (2 Sam. xiv. 17); able to guide the people by the skilfulness of his hands (Ps. lxxviii. 72); what kind of wisdom is there, which we may not now gather from thence? What depth of natural philosophy have we in Genesis and Job! what flowers of rhetoric in the prophets! what force of logic in Saint Paul's epistles! what art of poetry in the psalms! what excellent moral precepts, not only for private life, but for the regulation of families and commonwealths in the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes! to which may be added in a second rank as very useful, though apocryphal, the Book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. What reasonable and just laws have we in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, which moved the great Ptolemy to hire the Septuagints to translate them into Greek: what unmatchable antiquity, variety, and wonderful events, and certainty of story, in the books of Moses, Joshua, the Judges, Samuel, the Kings, and Chronicles, together with Ruth and Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah, and, since Christ, in the sacred Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. And, lastly, what profound mysteries have we in the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel, and the Revelation of Saint John. But in this it infinitely exceeds the wisdom of all human writings, that it is alone "able to make a man wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. iii. 15). Upon these considerations, Charles the Fifth of France, surnamed *The Wise*, not only caused the Bible to be translated into French, but was himself very studious in the Holy Scriptures. And Alphonsus, King of Arragon, is said to have read over the whole Bible fourteen several times, with Lyra's notes upon it; though he were otherwise excellently well learned, yet was the law of God his delight, "more desired of him than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."—*George Hakewell*, 1579—1649.

*Verse* 101.—"*I have refrained my feet*," etc. 1. We have David's practice: "*I have refrained my feet from every evil way.*" 2. His end or motive: "*That I might keep thy word;*" that he might be exact and punctual with God in a course of obedience.

First, In his practice. You may note the seriousness of it: "*I have refrained my feet.*" By the *feet* are meant the affections: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God," Eccl. v. 1. Our affections which are the rigorous bent of the soul, do engage us to practice; therefore fitly resembled by the feet, by which we walk to any place that we do desire: so that, "*I have refrained my feet*," the meaning is, I keep a close and strict hand over my affections, that they might not lead me to sin. Then you may note the extent of it; he doth not only say, I refrained from evil, but universally, "*from every evil way.*" But how could David say this in truth of heart, if conscious of his offence in the matter of Uriah? Answer: This was the usual frame and temper of his soul, and the course of his life; and such kind of assertions concerning the saints are to be interpreted, *voce et conatu, licet non semper eventu.* This was his errand and drift, his purpose and endeavour, his usual course, though he had his failings.

Secondly, What was his end and motive in this? "That I might keep thy word"; that I might be exact and punctual with God in a course of obedience, and adhere to his word universally, impartially.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 101.—"*I have refrained my feet*," etc. Where there is real holiness, there is a holy hatred, detestation, and indignation against all ungodliness and wickedness, and that upon holy accounts: "*I have refrained my feet from every evil way.*" But why? "*That I may keep thy word.*" "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way;" ver. 104. The good that he got by divine precepts stirred up his hatred against every false way: verse 128, "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning

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all things to be right; and I hate every false way." His high esteem of every precept raised up in him a holy indignation against every evil way. A holy man knows that all sin strikes at the holiness of God, the glory of God, the nature of God, the being of God, and the law of God; and therefore his heart rises against all; he looks upon every sin as the Scribes and Pharisees that accused Christ; and as that Judas that betrayed Christ; and as that Pilate that condemned Christ; and as those soldiers that scourged Christ; and as those spears that pierced Christ; and therefore his heart cries out for justice upon all.—*Thomas Brooks.*

*Verse* 101.—"*Refrained . . that I might keep.*" By doing what is right we come both to know right and to be better able to do it.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

*Verse* 101.—"*I have refrained my feet,*" etc. The word "*refrained*" warns us that we are naturally borne by our feet into the path of every kind of sin, and are hurried along it by the rush of human passions, so that even the wise and understanding need to check, recall, and retrace their steps, in order that they may keep God's word, and not become castaways. And further note that the Hebrew verb here translated "*refrained*" is even stronger in meaning, and denotes "I *fettered*, or *imprisoned*, my feet," whereby we may learn that no light resistance is enough to prevent them from leading us astray.—*Agellius and Genebrardus, in Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 102.—By *mishpalim*, "*judgments*," is meant God's law; for thereby he will judge the world. And the word "*departed not*" intimateth both his exactness and constancy: his exactness, that he did not go a hair's-breadth from his direction; "Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (Deut. v. 32); and his constancy is implied in it, for then we are said to depart from God and his law, when we fall off from him in judgment and practice. Jer. xxxii. 40.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 102.—"*Thou hast taught me.*" God teacheth two ways:—1. By common illumination. 2. By special operation.

1. By common illumination, barely enlightening the mind to know or understand what he propoundeth by his messengers: so God showed it to the heathen: Rom. i. 20.

But then, 2. By way of special operation, effectually inclining the will to embrace and prosecute duties so known: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts": Jer. xxxi. 33. This way of teaching is always effectual and persuasive. Now, in this sense they are taught of God, so that they do not only get an ear to hear, but a heart to understand, learn, and practise.

This teaching is the ground of constancy, because, (1) They that are thus taught of God see things more clearly than others do; God is the most excellent teacher. (2) They know things more surely, and with certainty of demonstration, whereas others have but dubious conjectures, and loose and wavering opinions about the things of God. (3) This teaching is so efficacious and powerful, as that the effect followeth: "Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth" (Ps. lxxxvi. 11). (4) God reneweth this teaching, and is always at hand to guide us, and give counsel to us, which is the cause of our standing.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 102.—"*For thou hast taught me.*" Lest it should seem that David ascribed the praise of godliness to himself, or that it came from any goodness in him that he did refrain his feet from every evil way, he gives here all the glory to God, protesting, that because God did teach him, therefore he declined not. Wherefrom we learn, that if at any time we stand, or if when we have fallen we rise and repent, it is ever to be imputed to God that teacheth us; for there is no evil so abominable, but it would soon become plausible to us, if God should leave us to ourselves. David was taught by his ordinary teachers, and he did reverence them; but that he profited by them

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he ascribes unto God. Paul may plant, and Apollos water; God must give the increase.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 103.—"*How sweet are thy words unto my taste!*" Even the words of a fellow-creature of earth, how inexpressibly sweet sometimes, how beyond all calculation precious! All gold and silver would be despised in comparison with them. They come freighted with love, and the heart is enriched with them as though the breath of God had come into it. But does not this rainbow of earthly joy die gradually out? Do not the enrapturing words sooner or later become exsiccated in the memory, and may they not meet with contemptuous treatment as remembrancers of an earthly illusion? Indeed they do; indeed they may.

Nevertheless the heart may find its happiness, its true and undying happiness, *in words.* At this moment there is nothing in the whole world so much to be desired as certain words. Words of love. Words expressive of infinite love. Treasures, pleasures, honours of earth, what are they? My unsatisfied soul cries out, Give me words. Words whereby I may know the love that God has towards me. Words declaring the unchangeable attachment of the Saviour. Words purifying my heart. Emboldening me in prayer. Exhibiting to me the blissful future. Words that shall give life to my dead powers, and change me from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.—*George Bowen, in "Daily Meditations,"* 1873.

*Verse* 103.—"*How sweet are thy words unto my taste!*" etc. There is given to the regenerated a new, supernatural sense, a certain divine, spiritual taste. This is in its whole nature diverse from any of the other five senses, and something is perceived by a true saint in the exercise of this new sense of mind, in spiritual and divine things, as entirely different from anything that is perceived in them by natural men, as the sweet taste of honey is diverse from the ideas men get of honey by looking on it or feeling of it. Now the beauty of holiness is that which is perceived by this spiritual sense, so diverse from all that natural men perceive in them; or, this kind of beauty is the quality that is the immediate object of this spiritual sense; this is the sweetness that is the proper object of this spiritual taste. The Scripture often represents the beauty and sweetness of holiness as the grand object of a spiritual taste and a spiritual appetite. This was the sweet food of the holy soul of Jesus Christ, John iv. 32, 34. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. . . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." I know of no part of the Holy Scriptures where the nature and evidence of true and sincere godliness are so fully and largely insisted on and delineated, as in the 119th Psalm. The Psalmist declares his design in the first verses of the psalm, keeps his eye on it all along, and pursues it to the end. The excellency of holiness is represented as the immediate object of a spiritual taste and delight. *God's law*, that grand expression and emanation of the holiness of God's nature, and prescription of holiness to the creature, is all along represented as the great object of the love, the complacence, and rejoicing of the gracious nature, which prizes God's commandments *above gold, yea, the finest gold*, and to which they are *sweeter than honey, and the honeycomb;* and that upon account of their holiness. The same psalmist declares that this is the sweetness that a spiritual taste relishes in God's law: Ps. xix. 7—10.—*Jonathan Edwards*, 1703—1758.

*Verse* 103.—"*How sweet are thy words unto my taste!*" Why does he not rather say, How pleasant are thy words to my ears? than that they are sweet to his taste and his mouth? I answer: It is most meet that when God speaks by the mouth of his ministers we should be hearers, and the words of God should be the most joyous of all to our ears. But it is also the practice of the godly to converse about the words of God, and their words are so sweet to their own taste that they are more pleased and delighted

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than by any honey from the comb. And this is most necessary when either there is a scarcity of teachers, as with David in the wilderness or dwelling among the Philistines; or when those who hold the office of teaching, adulterate and vitiate the pure word of God.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse* 103.—That which is here called "*word*," I take rather for "*judgments*," partly because in the proper tongue the word is left out, and partly because he had used this word "*judgments*" in the verse immediately going before. But some will say, How can the judgments of God be "*sweet*," which are so troublesome, fearful, and grievous? I answer, that the godly have no greater joy than when they feel either the mercies of God accomplished towards them that fear him, or his judgments showered upon the reprobates.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 103.—"*Unto my taste.*" "*To my mouth.*" That is, I take as great pleasure in talking, conferring, and persuading, thy judgments, as my mouth, or the mouth of any that loveth honey, is delighted therewith.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 103.—"*Sweeter.*" As there are always among violets some that are very much sweeter than others, so among texts there are some that are more precious to us than others.—*Henry Ward Beecher*, 1879.

*Verse* 103.—An affectionate wife often says, "My husband! your words are sweeter to me than honey; yes, they are sweeter than the sugar-cane." "Alas! my husband is gone," says the widow: "how sweet were his words! Honey dropped from his mouth: his words were ambrosia."—*Joseph Roberts.*

*Verse* 104.—"*Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.*" In this sentence the prophet seems to invert the order set down in verse 101. He had said, "I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word," where the avoiding of evil is made the means of profiting by the word; here his profiting by the word is made the cause of avoiding evil. In the one verse you have an account of his beginning with God; in the other, of his progress.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 104.—"*I hate every false way.*" David saith, "*I hate every false way*"; I hate not only the way when I have been misled into it, but I hate to go in it; and he professeth at the 163rd verse, "*I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love.*" To abstain from and forbear lying is a sign of a gracious heart, much more to hate and abhor it. A godly man not only doth that which is good, but he delights to do it, his soul cleaves to it; he is in his element when he is doing it, nothing comes more suitably to him than the business of his duty, he loveth to do it, yea, he loveth it when he cannot do it: Rom. vii. 22. Paul complained much that his corruptions clogged, hindered and shackled him; he was in lime twigs as to the doing of good, yet (saith he) "I delight in the law of God after the inward man"; that is, the inward man delightfully moves after the law of God, when I am basely moved by my corrupt heart, and stirred by temptation against it. Now, as a godly man not only chooseth to do the holy will of God, but delights and rejoiceth to do it, and hath sweet content in doing it; so likewise a godly man not only refuseth to do the will of the flesh, or to follow the course of the world, but hates to do it, and is never so discontented with himself as when through carelessness and neglect of his watch he hath been overtaken and hath fallen. A carnal man may forbear the doing of evil, and do what is materially good, but he never abhors what is evil, nor delights in what is good. Though he abstain from acting those things which God forbids, yet he doth not say, with Job, "God forbid, I should act them." . . . . To delight in good is better than the doing of it, and to abhor evil is better than abstaining from it. And if we compare the nature of sin with the new nature of a godly man, we may see clear grounds why his abstinence from sin is joined with an abhorrence of it.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse* 104.—"*Through thy precepts I get understanding.*" Spiritual un-



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derstanding is connected with the taste of spiritual sweetness. (Compare Proverbs ii. 10, 11.) "The sweetness of the lips"—as the wise man observes—"increaseth learning. The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips." Prov. xvi. 21, 23. Thus having learned "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," we are encouraged to "go on to perfection"—"growing *in grace* and in the knowledge of Christ." For the connexion between "grace and knowledge" is clearly manifested.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 104.—"*I hate every false way.*" Universality in this is a sure sign of sincerity. Herod spits out some sins, when he rolls others as sweet morsels in his mouth. A hypocrite ever leaves the devil some nest-egg to sit upon, though he take many away. Some men will not buy some commodities, because they cannot have them at their own price, but they lay out the same money on others; so hypocrites forbear some sins, yea, are displeased at them, because they cannot have them without disgrace or disease, or some other disadvantage; but they lay out the same love upon other sins which will suit better with their designs. Some affirm that what the sea loseth in one place it gaineth in another; so what ground the corruption of the unconverted loseth one way, it gaineth another. There is in him some one lust especially which is his favourite; some king sin, like Agag, which must be spared when others are destroyed. "In this the Lord be merciful to thy servant," saith Naaman. But now the regenerate laboureth to cleanse himself from all pollutions, both of flesh and spirit. 2 Cor. vii. 1. —*George Swinnock.*

*Verse* 104.—"*I hate.*" The Scriptures place religion very much in the affection of *love;* love to God, and the Lord Jesus Christ; love to the people of God, and to mankind. The texts in which this is manifest, both in the Old Testament and the New, are innumerable. The contrary affection of *hatred* also, as having sin for its object, is spoken of in Scripture as no inconsiderable part of true religion. It is spoken of as that by which true religion may be known and distinguished. Prov. viii. 13. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." Accordingly, the saints are called upon to give evidence of their sincerity by this, Psalm xcvii. 10. "Ye that love the Lord, *hate* evil." And the Psalmist often mentions it as an evidence of his sincerity: Ps. ci. 2, 3, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I *hate* the work of them that turn aside." So Ps. cxix., verse 128, and the present place. Again, Ps. cxxxix. 21: "Do not I *hate* them, O Lord, that hate thee?"—*Jonathan Edwards.*

*Verse* 104.—"*I hate.*" Hatred is a stabbing, murdering affection, it pursues sin with a hot heart to death, as an avenger of blood, that is to say, of the blood of the soul which sin would spill, and of the blood of Christ which sin hath shed. Hate sin perfectly and perpetually and then you will not spare it but kill it presently. Till sin be hated it cannot be mortified; you will not cry against it, as the Jews did against Christ, Crucify it! Crucify it! but shew indulgence to it as David did to Absalom and say, Deal gently with the young man,—with this or that lust, for my sake. Mercy to sin is cruelty to the soul.—*Edward Reyner*, 1600—1670.

*Verse* 104.—"*False way.*" It is not said, "evil way," but "false way": or, as it is in the original, every path of lying and falsehood. Falsehood is either in point of opinion or practice. If you take it in the first sense, for falsehood in opinion, or error in judgment, or false doctrine, or false worship, this sentence holds good. Those that get understanding by the word are established against error, and not only established against error, or against the embracing or possession of it, but they hate it.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 104.—"*False way.*" All sin is a *lie.* By it we attempt to cheat God. By it we actually cheat our souls: Prov. xiv. 12. There is no delusion like the folly of believing that a course of sin will conduce to our happiness.—*William S. Plumer.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 105 TO 112.

THY word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

106 I have sworn, and I will perform *it*, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

107 I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

108 Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.

109 My soul *is* continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.

110 The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they *are* the rejoicing of my heart.

112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, *even unto* the end.

105. "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.*" We are walkers through the city of this world, and we are often called to go out into its darkness; let us never venture there without the light-giving word, lest we slip with our feet. Each man should use the word of God personally, practically, and habitually, that he may see his way and see what lies in it. When darkness settles down upon all around me, the word of the Lord, like a flaming torch, reveals my way. Having no fixed lamps in eastern towns, in old time each passenger carried a lantern with him that he might not fall into the open sewer, or stumble over the heaps of ordure which defiled the road. This is a true picture of our path through this dark world: we should not know the way, or how to walk in it, if Scripture, like a blazing flambeau, did not reveal it. One of the most practical benefits of Holy Writ is guidance in the acts of daily life: it is not sent to astound us with its brilliance, but to guide us by its instruction. It is true the head needs illumination, but even more the feet need direction, else head and feet may both fall into a ditch. Happy is the man who personally appropriates God's word, and practically uses it as his comfort and counsellor,—a lamp to his own feet. "*And a light unto my path.*" It is a lamp by night, a light by day, and a delight at all times. David guided his own steps by it, and also saw the difficulties of his road by its beams. He who walks in darkness is sure, sooner or later, to stumble; while he who walks by the light of day, or by the lamp of night, stumbleth not, but keeps his uprightness. Ignorance is painful upon practical subjects; it breeds indecision and suspense, and these are uncomfortable: the word of God, by imparting heavenly knowledge, leads to decision, and when that is followed by determined resolution, as in this case, it brings with it great restfulness of heart.

This verse converses with God in adoring and yet familiar tones. Have we not something of like tenor to address to our heavenly Father?

Note how like this verse is to the first verse of the first octave, and the first of the second and other octaves. The seconds also are often in unison.

106. "*I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*" Under the influence of the clear light of knowledge he had firmly made up his mind, and solemnly declared his resolve in the sight of God. Perhaps mistrusting his own fickle mind, he had pledged himself in sacred form to abide faithful to the determinations and decisions of his

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God. Whatever path might open before him, he was sworn to follow that only upon which the lamp of the word was shining. The Scriptures are God's judgments, or verdicts, upon great moral questions; these are all righteous, and hence righteous men should be resolved to keep them at all hazards, since it must always be right to do right. Experience shows that the less of covenanting and swearing men formally enter upon the better, and the genius of our Saviour's teaching is against all supererogatory pledging and swearing; and yet under the gospel we ought to feel ourselves as much bound to obey the word of the Lord as if we had taken an oath so to do. The bonds of love are not less sacred than the fetters of law. When a man has vowed he must be careful to "perform it," and when a man has not vowed in so many words to keep the Lord's judgments, yet is he equally bound to do so by obligations which exist apart from any promise on our part,—obligations founded in the eternal fitness of things, and confirmed by the abounding goodness of the Lord our God. Will not every believer own that he is under bonds to the redeeming Lord to follow his example, and keep his words? Yes, the vows of the Lord are upon us, especially upon such as have made profession of discipleship, have been baptized into the thrice-holy name, have eaten of the consecrated memorials, and have spoken in the name of the Lord Jesus. We are enlisted, and sworn in, and are bound to be loyal soldiers all through the war. Thus having taken the word into our hearts by a firm resolve to obey it, we have a lamp within our souls as well as in the Book, and our course will be light unto the end.

107. "*I am afflicted very much.*" According to the last verse he had been sworn in as a soldier of the Lord, and in this next verse he is called to suffer hardness in that capacity. Our service of the Lord does not screen us from trial, but rather secures it for us. The Psalmist was a consecrated man, and yet a chastened man; nor were his chastisements light; for it seemed as if the more he was obedient the more he was afflicted. He evidently felt the rod to be cutting deep, and this he pleads before the Lord. He speaks not by way of murmuring, but by way of pleading; from the very much affliction he argues for very much quickening.

"*Quicken me, O* LORD, *according unto thy word.*" This is the best remedy for tribulation; the soul is raised above the thought of present distress, and is filled with that holy joy which attends all vigorous spiritual life, and so the affliction grows light. Jehovah alone can quicken: he has life in himself, and therefore can communicate it readily; he can give us life at any moment, yea, at this present instant; for it is of the nature of quickening to be quick in its operation. The Lord has promised, prepared, and provided this blessing of renewed life for all his waiting servants: it is a covenant blessing, and it is as obtainable as it is needful. Frequently the affliction is made the means of the quickening, even as the stirring of a fire promotes the heat of the flame. In their affliction some desire death, let us pray for life. Our forebodings under trial are often very gloomy, let us entreat the Lord to deal with us, not according to our fears, but according to his own word. David had but few promises to quote, and probably these were in his own psalms, yet he pleads the word of the Lord; how much more should we do so, since to us so many holy men have spoken by the Spirit of the Lord in that wonderful library which is now our Bible. Seeing we have more promises, let us offer more prayers.

108. "*Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O* LORD." The living praise the living God, and therefore the quickened one presents his sacrifice. He offers prayer, praise, confession, and testimony—these, presented with his voice in the presence of an audience, were the tribute of his mouth unto Jehovah. He trembles lest these should be so ill uttered as to displease the Lord, and therefore he implores acceptance. He pleads that the homage of his mouth was cheerfully and spontaneously rendered; all

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his utterances were freewill offerings. There can be no value in extorted confessions: God's revenues are not derived from forced taxation, but from freewill donation. There can be no acceptance where there is no willingness; there is no work of free grace where there is no fruit of free will. Acceptance is a favour to be sought from the Lord with all earnestness, for without it our offerings are worse than useless. What a wonder of grace that the Lord will accept anything of such unworthy ones as we are!

"*And teach me thy judgments.*" When we render unto the Lord our best, we become all the more concerned to do better. If, indeed, the Lord shall accept us, we then desire to be further instructed, that we may be still more acceptable. After quickening we need teaching: life without light, or zeal without knowledge, would be but half a blessing. These repeated cries for teaching show the humility of the man of God, and also discover to us our own need of similar instruction. Our judgment needs educating till it knows, agrees with, and acts upon, the judgments of the Lord. Those judgments are not always so clear as to be seen at once; we need to be taught in them till we admire their wisdom and adore their goodness as soon as ever we perceive them.

109. "*My soul is continually in my hand.*" He lived in the midst of danger. He had to be always fighting for existence—hiding in caves, or contending in battles. This is a very uncomfortable and trying state of affairs, and men are apt to think any expedient justifiable by which they can end such a condition: but David did not turn aside to find safety in sin, for he says, "*Yet do I not forget thy law.*" They say that all things are fair in love and war; but the holy man thought not so: while he carried his life in his hand, he also carried the law in his heart. No danger of body should make us endanger our souls by forgetting that which is right. Trouble makes many a man forget his duty, and it would have had the same effect upon the Psalmist if he had not obtained quickening (verse 107) and teaching (verse 108). In his memory of the Lord's law lay his safety; he was certain not to be forgotten of God, for God was not forgotten of him. It is a special proof of grace when nothing can drive truth out of our thoughts, or holiness out of our lives. If we remember the law even when death stares us in the face, we may be well assured that the Lord is remembering us.

110. "*The wicked have laid a snare for me.*" Spiritual life is the scene of constant danger: the believer lives with his life in his hand, and meanwhile all seem plotting to take it from him, by cunning if they cannot by violence. We shall not find it an easy thing to live the life of the faithful. Wicked spirits and wicked men will leave no stone unturned for our destruction. If all other devices fail, and even hidden pits do not succeed, the wicked still persevere in their treacherous endeavours, and, becoming craftier still, they set snares for the victim of their hate. The smaller species of game are usually taken by this method, by gin, or trap, or net, or noose. Wicked men are quite indifferent as to the manner in which they can destroy the good man—they think no more of him than if he were a rabbit or a rat: cunning and treachery are always the allies of malice, and everything like a generous or chivalrous feeling is unknown among the graceless, who treat the godly as if they were vermin to be exterminated. When a man knows that he is thus assailed, he is too apt to become timorous, and rush upon some hasty device for deliverance, not without sin in the endeavour; but David calmly kept his way, and was able to write, "*Yet I erred not from thy precepts.*" He was not snared, for he kept his eyes open, and kept near his God. He was not entrapped and robbed, for he followed the King's highway of holiness, where God secures safety to every traveller. He did not err from the right, and he was not deterred from following it, because he referred to the Lord for guidance, and obtained it. If we err from the precepts, we part with the promises; if we get away from God's presence, we wander into the wilds where the

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fowlers freely spread their nets. From this verse let us learn to be on our guard, for we, too, have enemies both crafty and wicked. Hunters set their traps in the animals' usual runs, and our worst snares are laid in our own ways. By keeping to the ways of the Lord we shall escape the snares of our adversaries, for his ways are safe and free from treachery.

111. "*Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever.*" He chose them as his lot, his portion, his estate; and what is more, he laid hold upon them and made them so,—taking them into possession and enjoyment. David's choice is our choice. If we might have our desire, we would desire to keep the commands of God perfectly. To know the doctrine, to enjoy the promise, to practise the command,—be this a kingdom large enough for me. Here we have an inheritance which cannot fade and cannot be alienated; it is for ever, and ours for ever, if we have so taken it. Sometimes, like Israel at the first coming into Canaan, we have to take our heritage by hard fighting, and, if so, it is worthy of all our labour and suffering; but always it has to be taken by a decided choice of the heart and grip of the will. What God gives we must take. "*For they are the rejoicing of my heart.*" The gladness which had come to him through the word of the Lord had caused him to make an unalterable choice of it. All the parts of Scripture had been pleasing to David, and were so still, and therefore he stuck to them, and meant to stick to them for ever. That which rejoices the heart is sure to be chosen and treasured. It is not the head-knowledge but the heart-experience which brings the joy.

In this verse, which is the seventh of its octave, we have reached the same sweetness as in the last seventh (103): indeed, in several of the adjoining sevenths, delight is evident. How good a thing it is when experience ripens into joy, passing up through sorrow, prayer, conflict, hope, decision, and holy content into rejoicing! Joy fixes the spirit: when once a man's heart rejoices in the divine word, he greatly values it, and is for ever united to it.

112. "*I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.*" He was not half inclined to virtue, but heartily inclined to it. His whole heart was bent on practical, persevering godliness. He was resolved to keep the statutes of the Lord with all his heart, throughout all his time, without erring or ending. He made it his end to keep the law unto the end, and that without end. He had by prayer, and meditation, and resolution made his whole being lean towards God's commands; or as we should say in other words—the grace of God had inclined him to incline his heart in a sanctified direction. Many are inclined to preach, but the Psalmist was inclined to practise; many are inclined to perform ceremonies, but he was inclined to perform statutes; many are inclined to obey occasionally, but David would obey alway; and, alas, many are inclined for temporary religion, but this godly man was bound for eternity, he would perform the statutes of his Lord and King even unto the end. Lord, send us such a heavenly inclination of heart as this: then shall we show that thou hast quickened and taught us. To this end create in us a clean heart, and daily renew a right spirit within us, for only so shall we incline in the right direction.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 105 TO 112.

*Verse* 105.—"*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light,*" etc. David was a man of very good wit and natural understanding; but he gives to God the glory of his wisdom, and owns that his best light was but darkness when he was not lightened and ruled by the word of God. Oh that we would consider this, that in all our ways wherein the word of God shines not unto us to direct us, we do but walk in darkness, and our ways without it can lead us to none other end but utter darkness. If we hearken not to the word of God, if we walk not by the rule thereof, how is it possible we can come to the face of God?—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 105.—"*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*" The use of a *lamp* is by night, while the *light* of the sun shineth by day. Whether it be day or night with us, we clearly understand our duty by the Word of God. The *night* signifieth adversity, and the *day* prosperity. Hence we may learn how to behave ourselves in all conditions. The word "*path*" noteth our general choice and course of life; the word "*feet*" our particular actions. Now whether the matter, wherein we would be informed, concerneth our choice of the way that leadeth to true happiness, or our dexterous prosecution of the way, still the word of God will direct a humble and well-disposed mind.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 105.—"*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,*" etc. Basil the Great, interpreting the "*word*" as God's will revealed in Holy Scripture, observes that the Old Testament, and in especial the Law, was only a *lantern* (*lamp* or *candle*) because an artificial light, imperfectly illumining the darkness, whereas the Gospel, given by the Lord Jesus himself, is a *light* of the Sun of Righteousness, giving brightness to all things. Ambrose, going yet deeper, tells us that Christ is himself both *lamp* and *light*. He, the Word of God, is a great light to some, to others he is a lamp. To me he is a lamp; to angels a light. He was a light to Peter, when the angel stood by him in the prison, and the light shined about him. He was a light to Paul when the light from heaven shined round about him, and he heard Christ saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And Christ is truly a lamp to me when I speak of him with my mouth. He shineth in clay, he shineth in a potter's vessel: he is that treasure which we bear in earthen vessels.—*Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 105.—"*Thy word is a lamp . . . and a light.*" Except the "*lamp*" be lighted—except the teaching of the Spirit accompany the word—all is "darkness, gross darkness" still. Did we more habitually wait to receive, and watch to improve, the light of the word, we should not so often complain of the perplexity of our path.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 105.—"*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,*" etc. What we all want, is not to see wonders that daze us, and to be rapt in ecstatic visions and splendours, but a little light on the dark and troubled path we have to tread, a lamp that will burn steadfastly and helpfully over the work we have to do. The stars are infinitely more sublime, meteors infinitely more superb and dazzling; but the lamp shining in a dark place is infinitely closer to our practical needs.—*From "The Expositor,"* 1864.

*Verse* 105.—"*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.*" Going two miles into a neighbourhood where very few could read, to spend an evening in reading to a company who were assembled to listen, and about to return by a narrow path through the woods, where paths diverged, I was provided with a torch of light wood, or "pitch pine." I objected; it was too small, weighing not over half a pound. "*It will light you home,*" answered my host. I said, "The wind may blow it out." He said, "It will light you home." "But if it should rain?" I again objected. "It will light you home," he insisted.

Contrary to my fears, it gave abundant light to my path all the way home, furnishing an apt illustration, I often think, of the way in which

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doubting hearts would be led safely along the "narrow way." If they would take the Bible as their guide, it would be a lamp to their feet, leading to the heavenly home. One man had five objections to the Bible. If he would take it as a lamp to his feet, it would "light him home." Another told me he had two faults to find with the Bible. I answered him in the words of my good friend who furnished the torch, "It will light you home."—*From "The American Messenger,"* 1881.

*Verse* 105.—"*A lamp unto my feet,*" etc. All depends on our way of using the lamp. A man tells that when a boy he was proud to carry the lantern for his Sabbath-school teacher. The way to their school led through unlit, muddy streets. The boy held the lantern far too high, and both sank in the deep mud. "Ah! you must hold the lamp lower," the teacher exclaimed, as they gained a firm footing on the farther side of the slough. The teacher then beautifully explained our text, and the man declares that he never forgot the lesson of that night. You may easily hold the lamp too high; but you can hardly hold it too low. — *James Wells, in "Bible Images,"* 1882.

*Verse* 105.—"*Light.*"

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom
Lead thou me on.
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead thou me on.
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.

*John Henry Newman* (1801—).

*Verses* 105, 106.—"*A light unto my path. I have sworn, and I will perform it,*" etc. I have looked upon thy word as a lamp to my own feet, as a thing nearly concerning myself, and then I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. It is a mighty means to stir up a man's spirit, and quicken him to obedience, to look upon the word as written to himself, as a lamp and a light for him. When you come to hear out of God's Word, and God directs the minister so that you apprehend the truth as spoken to you, it will stir and awaken you, and you will say, "Oh methought this day every word the minister spoke was directed to me; I must take heed thereto." And so every word in the Scripture that concerns thee God writes to thee; and if thou wilt take it so, it will be a mighty means to stir thee up to obedience.—*Jeremiah Burroughs,* 1599—1646.

*Verse* 106.—"*I have sworn,*" etc. Patrick's paraphrase is, "I have solemnly resolved and bound myself by the most sacred ties, which I will never break, but do now confirm."

*Verse* 106.—"*I have sworn.*" I would now urge you to make a solemn surrender of yourself unto the service of God. Do not only form such a purpose in your heart, but expressly declare it in the Divine presence. Such solemnity in the manner of doing it is certainly very reasonable in the nature of things; and sure it is highly expedient, for binding to the Lord such a treacherous heart, as we know our own to be. It will be pleasant to reflect upon it, as done at such and such a time, with such and such circumstances of place and method, which may serve to strike the memory and the conscience. The sense of the vows of God which are upon you will strengthen you in an hour of temptation; and the recollection may encourage your humble boldness and freedom in applying to him under the character and relation of your covenant God and Father, as future exigencies may require.

Do it therefore, but do it deliberately. Consider what it is that you are to do: and consider how reasonable it is that it should be done, and done cordially and cheerfully, "not by constraint, but willingly"; for in this sense, and every other, "God loveth a cheerful giver." . . . . . .

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Let me remind you that this surrender must be perpetual. You must give yourself up to God in such a manner, as never more to pretend to be your own; for the rights of God are, like his nature, eternal and immutable; and with regard to his rational creatures, are the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

I would further advise and urge, that this dedication may be made with all possible solemnity. Do it in express words. And perhaps it may be in many cases most expedient, as many pious divines have recommended, to do it in writing. Set your hand and seal to it, "that on such a day of such a month and year, and at such a place, on full consideration and serious reflection, you came to this happy resolution, that whatever others might do, you would serve the Lord."—*Philip Doddridge* (1702—1751) *in* "*The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.*"

*Verse* 106.—Frequently renew settled and holy resolutions. A soldier unresolved to fight may easily be defeated. True and sharpened courage treads down those difficulties which would triumph over a cold and wavering spirit. Resolution in a weak man will perform more than strength in a coward. The weakness of our graces, the strength of our temptations, and the diligence of our spiritual enemies, require strong resolutions. We must be "steadfast and unmoveable," and this will make us "abound in the work of the Lord": 1 Cor. xv. 58. Abundant exercise in God's work will strengthen the habit of grace, increase our skill in the contest, and make the victory more easy and pleasant to us. Let us frame believing, humble resolutions in the strength of God's grace, with a fear of ourselves, but a confidence in God. David bound himself to God with a hearty vow, depending upon his strength: "*I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*" This was not in his own strength, for, ver. 107, he desires God to quicken him, and to "accept the freewill offerings of his mouth," ver. 108, namely, the oath which proceeded from a free and resolved will. God will not slight, but strengthen the affectionate resolutions of his creature. We cannot keep ourselves from falling unless we first keep our resolutions from flagging.—*Stephen Charnock.*

*Verse* 106. — "*I have sworn, and I will perform it.*" Theodoricus, Archbishop of Cologne, when the Emperor Sigismund demanded of him the directest and most compendious way how to attain true happiness, made answer in brief, thus: "Perform when thou art well what thou promisedst when thou wast sick." David did so; he made vows in war, and paid them in peace; and thus should all good men do; not like the cunning devil, of whom the epigrammatist writeth:

> "The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be;
> The devil was well, the devil a monk was he."

Nor like unto many now-a-days, that, if God's hand do but lie somewhat heavy upon them, oh, what promises, what engagements are there for amendment of life! How like unto marble against rain do they seem to sweat and melt but still retain their hardness! Let but the rod be taken off their backs, or health restored, then, as their bodies live, their vows die; all is forgotten: nay, many times it so falleth out, that they are far worse than ever they were before.—*From John Spencer's* "*Things New and Old,*" 1658.

*Verse* 106.—"*Thy righteous judgments.*" So David styles the word of God, because it judgeth most righteously between right and wrong, truth and falsehood. And, secondly, because according to the judgment given therein, God will act towards men. Let us take heed unto it; for the word contains God's judgment of men and hath a catalogue of such as shall not inherit the kingdom of God, and another of such as shall dwell in God's tabernacle; let us read and see in which of the two catalogues our two selves are; for according to that word will the judgment go.— *William Cowper.*

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*Verse* 107.—"*I am afflicted very much*," etc. Whence learn, 1. It is no strange thing for the most holy men to be acquainted with the saddest sort of affliction, bodily and spiritual: "*I am afflicted very much.*" 2. From whence soever affliction doth come, faith goeth to God only for comfort, as here: "*Quicken me, O* LORD." 3. When God is pleased to make the word of promise lively, or to perform what the promise alloweth us to expect, such a consolation is a sufficient antidote to the heaviest affliction: "*Quicken me, O* LORD, *according unto thy word.*"—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 107.—"*I am afflicted very much.*" We can recommend so persuasively the cheerful drinking of the cup of sorrow when in the hand of others, but what wry faces we make when it is put into our own.—*Alfred John Morris*, 1814—1869.

*Verse* 107.—"*I am afflicted . . . quicken me.*" The Christian lives in the midst of crosses, as the fish lives in the sea.—*Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney*, 1786—1859.

*Verse* 107.—"*Quicken me, O* LORD." How doth God quicken us? By reviving our suffering graces, such as our hope, patience, and faith. Thus he puts life into us again, that we may go on cheerfully in our service, by infusion of new comforts. He revives the heart of his contrite ones, so the prophet saith (Isai. lvii. 15). This is very necessary, for the Psalmist saith elsewhere, "Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name" (Ps. lxxx. 18). Discomfort and discouragement weaken our hands in calling upon God. Until the Lord cheers us again we have no life in prayer. By two things especially doth God quicken us in affliction, by reviving our sense of his love, and by reviving our hope of glory.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 107.—"*According unto thy word.*" David goes often over with that phrase, which imports that David lay under the sense of some promise which God had made for the quickening of his heart when it was out of frame, and accordingly he recounts the gracious influences of God's Spirit, and professeth that he will never forget his precepts, because by them he had quickened him: ver. 93.

Thus, lay your dead hearts at Christ's feet, and plead in this manner: Lord, my heart is exceedingly dull and distracted; I feel not those enlarging, melting influences which thy saints have felt; but are they not chief material mercies of the covenant? dost thou not promise a spirit of illumination, conviction, and humiliation? is not holiness of heart and life a main branch of it? dost thou not promise therein to write thy law in my heart? to give me oneness of heart, to put thy fear within me, to subdue my corruptions, to help my infirmities in prayer? Now, Lord, these are the mercies my soul wants and waits for, fill my soul with these animating influences, revive thy work of grace in my soul, draw out my heart towards thee, increase my affection for thee, repair thine image, call forth grace into lively exercise. Doth not that gracious word intend such a mercy when thou sayest thou wilt not only give a new heart, but "put a new spirit within me" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26), to make my soul lively, active, and spiritual in duties and exercises? Dear Lord, am not I in covenant with thee? and are not these covenant mercies? why, then, my God, is my heart thus hardened from thy fear? why dost thou leave me in all this deadness and distraction? Remember thy word unto thy servant in which thou hast caused me to hope, and which thou hast helped me to plead; O quicken my dull heart according to thy word.—*Oliver Heywood.*

*Verse* 107.—"*According unto thy word.*" David, when he begs for quickening, he is encouraged so to do by a promise. The question is, where this promise should be? Some think it was that general promise of the law, if thou do these things, thou shalt live in them (Lev. xviii. 5), and that from thence David drew this particular conclusion, that God would give life to his people. But rather, it was some other promise, some word of God he had, to bear him out in this request. The Lord has made many promises to

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us of sanctifying our affliction. The fruit of all shall be the taking away of sin (Isai. xxvii. 9); of bettering and improving us by it (Heb. ii. 10), of moderating our affliction, that he will stay his rough wind in the day of the east wind (Isai. xxvii. 8); that he will lay no more upon us than he will enable us to bear (1 Cor. x. 13). He hath promised he will moderate our affliction, so that we shall not be tempted above our strength. He hath promised he will deliver us from it, that the rod of the wicked shall not always rest on the lot of the righteous (Ps. cxxv. 3); that he will be with us in it, and never fail us (Heb. xiii. 5). Now, I argue thus: if the people of God could stay their hearts upon God's word, when they had but such obscure hints to work upon that we do not know where the promise lies, ah! how should our hearts be stayed upon God, when we have so many promises! When the Scriptures are enlarged for the comfort and enlarging of our faith, surely we should say now as Paul, when he got a word, "I believed God" (Acts xxvii. 25); I may expect God will do thus for me, when his word speaks it everywhere.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 108.—"*The freewill offerings of the mouth,*" may be the offerings which the mouth had promised and vowed. And who can lay claim to these as the Lord? His are all things.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 108.—"*The freewill offerings of my mouth.*" This place makes known that species of sacrifices, which neither tribulations nor poverty of means can hinder, and which does not require an external temple, but in desert places and among heathen may be offered by a godly man. And these sacrifices of the mouth God himself makes more of than if all the flocks of the whole earth had been offered to him, and all the treasures of gold, and of silver, and of precious stones.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse* 108.—"*Freewill offerings.*" This expression is often used in the law (Lev. xxii. 18; Numb. xxix. 39; 2 Chron. xxxi. 14; Amos iv. 5). What are these freewill offerings? They are distinguished from God's stated worship, and distinguished from that service which fell under a vow. Besides the stated peace-offerings, there were certain sacrifices performed upon certain occasions, to testify God's general goodness, and upon receipt of some special mercy; and you will find these sacrifices to be expressly distinguished from such services as men bound themselves to by vow (Lev. vii. 16). . . . . These serve to teach us two things. 1st. They are to teach us how ready we should be to take all occasions of thankfulness and spiritual worship; for, besides their vowed services and instituted sacrifices, they had their freewill offerings, offered to God in thankfulness for some special blessing received, or for deliverance from danger. 2ndly. It shows with what voluntariness and cheerfulness we should go about God's worship in the Gospel, and what a free disposition of heart there should be, and edge upon our affections, in all things that we offer to God; in this latter sense our offerings to God—prayer and praise—should be freewill offerings, come from us not like water out of a still forced by the fire, but like water out of a fountain with native freeness, readily and freely.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 108.—"*Offerings.*" All God's people are made priests unto God; for every offering supposeth a priest: so it is said, that Christ Jesus hath made us kings and priests (Rev. i. 6). All Christians have a communion with Christ in all his offices; whatever Christ was, that certainly they are in some measure and degree.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 108.—"*Accept . . . . . the freewill offerings of my mouth, O* LORD." It is a great grace that the Lord should accept anything from us, if we consider these three things: First, who the Lord is; next, what we are; thirdly, what it is we have to give unto him.

As for the Lord, he is all-sufficient, and stands in need of nothing we can give him. Our goodness extends not to the Lord (Ps. xvi.).

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As for us, we are poor creatures, living by his liberality; yea, begging from all the rest of his creatures; from the sun and moon; from the air, the water, and the earth; from fowls and fishes; yea, from the worms: some give us light, some meat, some clothes; and are such beggars as we meet to give to a king?

And, thirdly, if we well consider, What is it that we give? Have we anything to give but that which we have received from him? and whereof we may say with David, "O Lord, all things are of thee, and of thine own have we given thee again" (1 Chron. xxix. 14). Let this humble us, and restrain us from that vain conceit of meriting at God's hand.

David at this time, in his great necessity, having no other sacrifice to offer unto the Lord, offers him the calves of his lips; but no doubt, when he might, he offered more.

There is nothing so small, but if it come from a good heart, God will accept it: the widow's mite, a cup of cold water; yea, and the praise of our lips, although it has no other external oblation joined with it: but where men may do more, and will not, it is an argument that their heart is not sincerely affected toward him, and their praises are not welcome to him.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 108.—"*Accept . . . . the freewill offerings of my mouth, O* LORD, *and teach me thy judgments.*" Two things we are here taught to pray for in reference to our religious performances.

1. Acceptance of them: this we must aim at in all we do in religion, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of the Lord. That which David here earnestly prays for the acceptance of is "*the freewill offerings,*" not of his purse, but of his "*mouth,*" his prayers and praises; "the calves of our lips" (Hosea xiv. 2); "the fruit of our lips" (Heb. xiii. 15); these are the spiritual offerings which all Christians, as spiritual priests, must offer to God; and they must be "*freewill offerings;*" for we must offer them abundantly and cheerfully; and it is this willing mind that is accepted. The more there is of freeness and willingness in the service of God, the more pleasing it is to him.

2. Assistance in them: "*Teach me thy judgments.*" We cannot offer any thing to God which we have reason to think he will accept of, but what he is pleased to instruct us in the doing of; and we must be as earnest for the grace of God in us as for the favour of God toward us.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 108.—"*Teach me thy judgments.*" As if the man of God should say, This is one thing whereunto I will give over myself, even to see how thou dost punish the wicked, and conduct thy children. So that we must learn, that as it is necessary to understand the law and the gospel, so is it requisite to discern God's judgments. For as we cannot learn the one without observing God's mercy; so we cannot attain to the other without marking his vengeance. We must see always by the peculiar teaching of God's Spirit, how the Lord punisheth in justice, and yet in mercy; in wrath, and yet in love; in rigour and hatred of our sin, humbling us with one hand; in pity and compassion to our salvation, comforting us with the other hand. We see then how the prophet prayeth, both to see them and to mark them: we need teach this often, because we dream so much of fatal necessity, and of the connections of natural causes, or else because we cannot discern between the crosses of the godly and the ungodly. . . This is then a singular gift of God, to discern how by the self-same means the Lord both humbleth the good and overthroweth the wicked.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 109.—"*My soul is continually in my hand.*" He had his soul in his hand, ready to give whenever God should take it. And this is to be observed, that there is no trouble so ready to take away the life of God's children, as they are ready to give it. As Elijah came out to the mouth of his cave to meet with the Lord; and Abraham stood in the door of his

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tent to speak to the angel; so the soul of the godly stands ready in the door of the tabernacle of this body to remove when the Lord shall command it; whereas the soul of the wicked lies back, hiding itself, as Adam among the bushes, and is taken out of the body perforce; as was the soul of that worldling; "This night thy soul shall be required of thee;" but they never sacrifice their souls willingly to the Lord.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 109.—"*My soul is continually in my hand.*" If any one carry in the hand a fragile vessel, made of glass or any other similar material, filled with a precious liquor, especially if the hand be weak, or if from other causes dangers be threatening, he will scarcely be able to avoid the breaking of the vessel and the running out of the liquor. Such is the condition of my life, which I, set upon by various enemies, carry as it were in my hand; which, therefore, is exposed to such great danger, as that I always have death present before my sight, my life hanging on the slenderest thread.—*Andreas Rivetus*, 1572—1651.

*Verse* 109.—"*My soul is continually in my hand.*" The believer is always in the very jaws of death. He lives with wings outstretched to fly away. Paul testified, "I die daily." In the extremity of persecution, the fervent desire was to know what God would have him to do.—*Henry Law.*

*Verse* 109.—"*My soul is continually in my hand.*" I make no more of life than a child doth of his bird which he carrieth in the palm of his hand held open.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 109.—"*My soul is continually in my hand,*" etc. Why doth David say, "My soul is in mine hand"; had he called it out of the hand of God, and taken the care of it upon himself? Nothing less. His meaning is only this,—I walk in the midst of dangers and among a thousand deaths continually; I am in deaths often, my life is exposed to perils every day, yet do I not forget thy law: I keep close to thee, and will keep close to thee whatsoever comes of it. Augustine upon that place doth ingeniously confess that he understood not what David meant, by having his soul in his hands; but Jerome, another of the ancients, teacheth us, that it is an Hebraism, signifying a state of extremest peril. The Greeks also have drawn it into a proverb speaking the same thing.

But why doth the holding or putting the life in the hand signify the exposing of the life to peril? There is a twofold reason of it.

First. Because those things which are carried openly in the hand are apt to fall out of the hand, and being carried in sight, they are apt to be snatched or wrested out of the hand. And, therefore, though to be in the hand of God signifies *safety*, because his hand is armed with irresistible power to protect us; yet for a man to carry a thing in his own hand is to carry it in danger, because his hand is weak, and there are safer ways of carrying or conveying a thing than openly in the hand. If a man be to ride a long journey with any treasure about him, he doth not carry it in his hand, but puts it in some secret and close place where it may be hidden, and so be more secure. The Chaldee paraphrast, to express the elegancy of that place forecited out of the Psalm, gives it thus, "*My life is in as much danger as if it stood upon the very superficies or outside of my hand,*" as if he had no hold of it, but it stood barely upon his hand; for that which is set upon the palm of the hand, and not grasped, is in greater danger. Things safe kept are hidden or held fast.

Secondly. There is another reason of that speech, because when a man is about to deliver a thing or to give it up, he takes it in his hand. They that put themselves upon great perils and dangers for God and his people, deliver up their lives and their all to God. Hence that counsel of the Apostle (1 Pet. iv. 19): "Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." So here, the life of men in danger is said to be put in the hand, because such are, as it were, ready to deliver and commit their lives unto

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God, that he would take care of their lives to preserve them from the danger, or to take them to himself if they lose them in his service.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse* 110.—"*The wicked.*" He calls them *wicked men;* which importeth three things. First, they work wickedness. Secondly, they love it. Thirdly, they persevere in it.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 110.—"*A snare.*" One manner of catching wild animals, such as lions, bears, jackals, foxes, hart, roebuck, and fallow-deer, was by a trap (*pach*), which is the word used in this place; this was set under ground (Job xviii. 10), in the run of the animal (Prov. xxii. 5), and caught it by the leg (Job xviii. 9).—*William Latham Bevan, in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible,* 1863.

*Verse* 110.—"*The wicked have laid a snare for me.*" In eating, he sets before us gluttony; in love he impels to lust; in labour, sluggishness; in conversing, envy; in governing, covetousness; in correcting, anger; in honour, pride; in the heart, he sets evil thoughts; in the mouth evil words; in actions, evil works; when awake, he moves us to evil actions; when asleep, to filthy dreams.—*Girolamo Savonarola,* 1452—1498.

*Verse* 110.—"*Laid a snare for me: yet I erred not,*" etc. It is not the laying the bait hurts the fish, if the fish do not bite.—*Thomas Watson.*

*Verse* 111.—"*Thy testimonies have I taken,*" etc. The Scripture is called "*testimonies*" in respect to God himself, because it doth give a testimony to him, and makes God known to us: it gives a testimony of all those attributes that are himself, of his wisdom, of his power, of his justice, of his goodness, of his truth. The declaration of these, we have them all in the various books of the Scriptures: there is never a book, but there is a testification of these attributes. In the book of Genesis we have a testimony of his *power* in making the world, of his *justice* in drowning the world, and of his *goodness* in saving Noah. In the book of Exodus, we have a testimony of his *providence* in leading the people of Israel through the Red Sea, in bringing them out of Egypt; we have a testimony of his *wisdom* in giving them his law. What should I name more? In the *New* Testament, in the Gospel, all is testimony. As the *Old* gave testimony to *God,* so the *New* to *Christ:* "To him gave all the prophets witness;" not only the *Old,* but the *New:* "These are they that testify of me." Everywhere there is testimony of Christ,—of his *humility,* in taking our nature; of his *power,* in working miracles; of his *wisdom,* in the parables that he spoke; of his *patience* and *love,* in the torments that he suffered for us. Both Law and Gospel—the whole book of Scripture, and every part of it in these regards is fitly called "*the testimonies of the Lord.*" And the holy Psalmist made choice of this name when he was to speak to the honour and glory of it; because it was that name from which he sucked a great deal of comfort, because it was the testimony of God's *truth* and *goodness* and *wisdom* and *power* to him; thereupon he makes so precious esteem of it as to account it his "*heritage.*"—*Richard Holdsworth* (1590—1649), *in* "*The Valley of Vision.*"

*Verse* 111.—"*Thy testimonies.*" By "*testimonies*" is meant the covenant between God and his people; wherein he bindeth himself to them, and them to him. Some think that the excellency of the word is here set out by many names; but we must look to the propriety of every word: as before by "judgments," so by this word "*testimonies,*" is meant the covenant: not the commandments, because they cannot be an inheritance, for they cannot comfort us, because we cannot fulfil them, but fail in them, and cannot therefore take comfort in them. It is the gospel that bringeth peace and comfort. "*The law,*" when it is taken generally, containeth all the word, particularly the commandments; so "*the word*" generally containeth both law and gospel, but particularly the promises, as Rom. x. So likewise by the "*testimonies,*" when they are opposed to the law, is meant

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the promises of the covenant, as Isaiah viii., and this testimony is confirmed to us by the sacraments, as to them by sacrifices.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 111.—"*As an heritage.*" Why the divine testimonies should be called by the Psalmist an *inheritance;* why he brings them within the compass of this notion, may not so easily be understood; for the word of God points out the inheritance, but it is not the inheritance itself. Yes, there is good reason to be given for the expression, were there no more than this, that we consider the inestimable comfort, and heavenly treasure that is to be found in the word of God; it is a rich mine of all celestial treasure, it is a storehouse of all good things, of all saving knowledge. All privileges whatsoever they are that we can expect on earth or heaven, they are all contained in the word of God: here is ground enough why it is called an *inheritance;* he hath a good *heritage* that hath all these.

Yet there is a better reason than this; for if it be so that heaven is our inheritance, then the word of God is; because it is the word that points out heaven, that gives the *assurance* of heaven: we have in the word of God all the evidences of heaven. Whatsoever *title* any saint hath to heaven, he hath it in and out of the word of God. There are the evidences in the word of God; both the evidence of *discovery*, it is the holy terrier of the celestial Canaan, and the evidence of *assurance*, it is as a sacred bond or indenture between God and his creature. St. Gregory said wittily, when he called it God's epistle that he sent to man for the declaration of his will and pleasure, he might as well have called it God's deed of gift, whereby he makes over and conveys to us all those hopes that we look for in heaven. Whatsoever interest we have in God, in Christ, whatsoever hope of bliss and glory, whatsoever comfort of the Spirit, whatsoever proportion of grace, all are made over to us in the promises of the gospel, in the word of God.

Now put this together, look as in human affairs, *evidences*, though they be not properly the inheritance itself, yet they are called the inheritance, and are the inheritance, though not actually, yet virtually so; because all the title we have to an inheritance is in the deeds and evidences; therefore evidences are precious things. Though it be but a piece of paper, or parchment full of dust and worm-eaten, yet it is as much worth sometimes as a county, as much worth as all a man's possessions besides. So likewise it is with the Scriptures; they are not actually and properly the inheritance itself, but they are *via*, the way to the kingdom. It is called the gospel of the kingdom, nay more, the kingdom itself: "The kingdom of God is come among you," or "to you." Why the kingdom? Why the inheritance? By the same reason, both, because here we have the *conveyance*, here we have the *deed*, here we have the *assurance* of whatsoever title or claim we make to heaven.—*Richard Holdsworth.*

*Verse* 111.—"*They are the rejoicing of my heart.*" He saith not that God's testimonies bring joy, but that they are joy; there is no other joy but the delight in the law of the Lord. For all other joy, the wise king said of laughter, "thou art mad," and of joy, "what is it that thou dost?" Ecc. ii. True joy is the earnest which we have of heaven, it is the treasure of the soul, and therefore should be laid up in a safe place; and nothing in this world is safe to place it in. And therefore with the spouse we say, "We will be glad in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine." Let others seek their joy in wine, in society, in conversation, in music; for me, thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. These indeed are the precious fruits of the earth, but they seal not up special favour; a man may have together with them, an empty, husky, and chaffy soul. And therefore these are not the joys of the saints; they must have God, or else they die for sorrow; his law is their life.—*Abraham Wright.*

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*Verse* 112.—"*I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes alway,*" etc. In the former verse he showed his faith, and his joy which came thereof; now he showeth that here in this joy he will keep the commandments; whereby he showeth that this was a true joy, because it wrought a care to do good. For if we believe the promises truly, then we also love the commandments, otherwise faith is vain; a care to live a godly life nourisheth faith in God's promises. Here is the cause then why many regard not the word and sacraments; or if they do a little, it is to no purpose, because they labour not to keep the commandments. For unless they have care to do this, the word of God to them cannot be profitable, nor the sacraments sacred.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 112.—"*I have inclined my heart to perform,*" etc. Observe. In the 36th verse he prayed to God, saying, "*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.*" And here he speaks about himself, saying, "*I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway even unto the end.*" What need, then, was there to ask from God that which he in another place glories to have done himself? I answer: These things are not contrary the one to the other. God inclines, and the godly man inclines. Man inclines by striving; God inclines by effecting. Neither is that which the man attempts, nor that which he by striving achieves goodwards, from the man, but from God, who gives, "*both to will and to do of His good pleasure:*" Phil. ii. 13.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse* 112.—The sinful heart of itself will run any way; upon earthly things, upon evil things, or upon impertinent and unseasonable things; but it will not come to or keep upon that which it should mind; therefore it must be taken as by strong hand, and set upon spiritual things, set on musing and meditation of heavenly things. A carnal heart is like the loadstone, it cleaves to nothing but steel or iron, and both of them easily unite: but the heart must be of another property, and act in a higher way. And a good heart, though it thinks too much earthward, and runs often wrong, yet it will set itself in its thinkings on right objects, and make itself and them to meet and unite. David tells us how he did; he *inclined his heart to God's commandments*, both to keep them and to meditate on them. He took and *bent his heart*, as a thing bending too much to other things; set his mind on musing on it. He found his heart and the law of God too far asunder, and so would continue, unless he brought them together and made them one. If he had not brought his heart to the word, he had never meditated: the object cannot apply itself to the mind, but the mind must bring itself to the object. No holy duties will come to us, we must come to them.—*Nathanael Ranew, in "Solitude Improved by Divine Meditation,"* 1670.

*Verse* 112.—"*I have inclined mine heart to perform,*" etc. In this work he was determined to *continue*. 1. "*I have inclined my heart.*" The counsel of the soul is like a balance; and the mind, which hath the commanding power over the affections, inclines the balance to that which it judges best. 2. It was to *perform it*, that he thus *inclined his heart*. 3. And this not for a *time*, or some *particular occasion*, but *always*, and unto *the end*. Then *the end of life* would be the *beginning of glory.—Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 112.—"*I have inclined my heart.*" The prophet, in order briefly to define what it is to serve God, asserts that he applied not only his hands, eyes, or feet, to the keeping of the law, but that he began with the affection of the heart.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 112.—"*Unto the end.*" Our life on earth is a race; in vain begins he to run swiftly, that fainteth, and gives over before he come to the end. And this was signified (saith Gregory) when in the law the tail of the beast was sacrificed with the rest: perseverance crowneth all. It is good we have begun to do well; let us also strive to persevere to the end.—*William Cowper.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 113 TO 120.

I HATE *vain* thoughts: but thy law do I love.

114 Thou *art* my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.

115 Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.

116 Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.

117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

118 Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit *is* falsehood.

119 Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth *like* dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.

120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

118. "*I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.*" In this paragraph the Psalmist deals with thoughts and things and persons which are the opposite of God's holy thoughts and ways. He is evidently in great fear of the powers of darkness, and of their allies, and his whole soul is stirred up to stand against them with a determined opposition. Just as he began the octave, verse 97, with "O how I love thy law," so here he begins with a declaration of hatred against that which breaks the law. The opposite of the fixed and infallible law of God is the wavering, changing opinion of men: David had an utter contempt and abhorrence for this; all his reverence and regard went to the sure word of testimony. In proportion to his love to the law was his hate of man's inventions. The thoughts of men are vanity; but the thoughts of God are verity. We hear much in these days of "men of thought," "thoughtful preachers," and "modern thought": what is this but the old pride of the human heart? Vain man would be wise. The Psalmist did not glory in his thoughts; and that which was called "thought" in his day was a thing which he detested. When man thinks his best his highest thoughts are as far below those of divine revelation as the earth is beneath the heavens. Some of our thoughts are specially vain in the sense of vain-glory, pride, conceit, and self-trust; others in the sense of bringing disappointment, such as fond ambition, sinful dreaming, and confidence in man; others in the sense of emptiness and frivolity, such as the idle thoughts and vacant romancings in which so many indulge; and, yet once more, too many of our thoughts are vain in the sense of being sinful, evil, and foolish. The Psalmist is not indifferent to evil thoughts as the careless are; but upon them he looks with a hate as true as was the love with which he clung to the pure thoughts of God.

The last octave was practical, this is thoughtful; there the man of God attended to his feet, and here to his heart: the emotions of the soul are as important as the acts of the life, for they are the fountain and spring from which the actions proceed. When we love the law it becomes a law of love, and we cling to it with our whole heart.

114. "*Thou art my hiding place and my shield.*" To his God he ran for shelter from vain thoughts; there he hid himself away from their tormenting intrusions, and in solemn silence of the soul he found God to be his hiding-place. When called into the world, if he could not be alone with



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God as his hiding-place, he could have the Lord with him as his shield, and by this means he could ward off the attacks of wicked suggestions. This is an experimental verse, and it testifies to that which the writer knew of his own personal knowledge: he could not fight with his own thoughts, or escape from them, till he flew to his God, and then he found deliverance. Observe that he does not speak of God's word as being his double defence, but he ascribes that to God himself. When we are beset by very spiritual assaults, such as those which arise out of vain thoughts, we shall do well to fly distinctly to the person of our Lord, and to cast ourselves upon his real presence. Happy is he who can truly say to the triune God, "Thou art my hiding-place." He has beheld God under that glorious covenant aspect which ensures to the beholder the surest consolation. "*I hope in thy word.*" And well he might, since he had tried and proved it: he looked for protection from all danger, and preservation from all temptation to him who had hitherto been the tower of his defence on former occasions. It is easy to exercise hope where we have experienced help. Sometimes when gloomy thoughts afflict us, the only thing we can do is to hope, and, happily, the word of God always sets before us objects of hope and reasons for hope, so that it becomes the very sphere and support of hope, and thus tiresome thoughts are overcome. Amid fret and worry a hope of heaven is an effectual quietus.

115. "*Depart from me, ye evil doers.*" Those who make a conscience of their thoughts are not likely to tolerate evil company. If we fly to God from vain thoughts, much more shall we avoid vain men. Kings are all too apt to be surrounded by a class of men who flatter them, and at the same time take liberty to break the laws of God: David purged his palace of such parasites; he would not harbour them beneath his roof. No doubt they would have brought upon him an ill name, for their doings would have been imputed to him, since the acts of courtiers are generally set down as acts of the court itself; therefore the king sent them packing bag and baggage, saying,—"Depart from me." Herein he anticipated the sentence of the last great day, when the Son of David shall say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." We cannot thus send all malefactors out of our houses, but it will often become a duty to do so where there is right and reason for it. A house is all the better for being rid of liars, pilferers, lewd talkers, and slanderers. We are bound at all hazards to keep ourselves clear of such companions as come to us by our own choice if we have any reason to believe that their character is vicious. Evil doers make evil counsellors. Those who say unto God, "Depart from us," ought to hear the immediate echo of their words from the mouths of God's children, "Depart from us. We cannot eat bread with traitors."

"*For I will keep the commandments of my God.*" Since he found it hard to keep the commandments in the company of the ungodly, he gave them their marching orders. He *must* keep the commandments, but he did not need to keep their company. What a beautiful title for the Lord this verse contains! The word *God* only occurs in this one place in all this lengthened psalm, and then it is attended by the personal word "my"—"my God."

> "My God! how charming is the sound!
> How pleasant to repeat!
> Well may that heart with pleasure bound,
> Where God hath fix'd his seat."
>
> *Doddridge.*

Because Jehovah is our God therefore we resolve to obey him, and to chase out of our sight those who would hinder us in his service. It is a grand thing for the mind to have come to a point, and to be steadfastly fixed in the holy determination,—"I will keep the commandments." God's law is our pleasure when the God of the law is our God.

116. "*Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live.*" It was so

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necessary that the Lord should hold up his servant, that he could not even live without it. Our soul would die if the Lord did not continually sustain it, and every grace which makes spiritual life to be truly life would decay if he withdrew his upholding hand. It is a sweet comfort that this great necessity of upholding is provided for in the word, and we have not to ask for it as for an uncovenanted mercy, but simply to plead for the fulfilment of a promise, saying, "Uphold me according to thy word." He who has given us eternal life hath in that gift secured to us all that is essential thereto, and as gracious upholding is one of the necessary things we may be sure that we shall have it. "*And let me not be ashamed of my hope.*" In verse 114 he had spoken of his hope as founded on the word, and now he begs for the fulfilment of that word that his hope might be justified in the sight of all. A man would be ashamed of his hope if it turned out that it was not based upon a sure foundation; but this will never happen in our case. We may be ashamed of our thoughts, and our words, and our deeds, for they spring from ourselves; but we never shall be ashamed of our hope, for that springs from the Lord our God. Such is the frailty of our nature that unless we are continually upheld by grace. we shall fall so foully as to be ashamed of ourselves, and ashamed of all those glorious hopes which are now the crown and glory of our life. The man of God had uttered the most positive resolves, but he felt that he could not trust in his own solemn determination: hence these prayers. It is not wrong to make resolutions, but it will be useless to do so unless we salt them well with believing cries to God. David meant to keep the law of the Lord, but he first needed the Lord of the law to keep him.

117. "*Hold thou me up*": as a nurse holds up a little child. "*And I shall be safe,*" and not else; for unless thou hold me up I shall be falling about like an infant that is weak upon its knees. We are saved by past grace, but we are not safe unless we receive present grace. The Psalmist had vowed to keep the Lord's commands, but here he pleads with the Lord to keep him: a very sensible course of procedure. Our version reads the word "uphold," and then "hold up;" and truly we need this blessing in every shape in which it can come, for in all manner of ways our adversaries seek to cast us down. To be safe is a happy condition; there is only one door to it, and that is to be held up by God himself; thank God, that door is open to the least among us. "*And I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.*" In obedience is safety; in being held up is obedience. No man will outwardly keep the Lord's statutes for long together unless he has an inward respect for them, and this will never be unless the hand of the Lord perpetually upholds the heart in holy love. Perseverance to the end, obedience continually, comes only through the divine power; we start aside as a deceitful bow unless we are kept right by him that first gave us grace. Happy is the man who realizes this verse in his life: upheld through his whole life in a course of unswerving integrity, he becomes a safe and trusted man, and maintains a sacred delicacy of conscience which is unknown to others. He feels a tender respect for the statutes of the Lord, which keeps him clear of inconsistencies and conformities to the world that are so common among others, and hence he is a pillar in the house of the Lord. Alas, we know some professors who are not upright, and therefore they lean to sin till they fall over, and though they are restored they are never safe or reliable, neither have they that sweet purity of soul which is the charm of the more sanctified who have been kept from falling into the mire.

118. "*Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes.*" There is no holding up for them; they are thrown down and then trodden down, for they choose to go down into the wandering ways of sin. Sooner or later God will set his foot on those who turn their foot from his commands: it has always been so, and it always will be so to the end. If the salt has lost its savour, what is it fit for but to be trodden under foot? God puts

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away the wicked like dross, which is only fit to be cast out as road-metal to be trodden down.

"*For their deceit is falsehood.*" They call it far-seeing policy, but it is absolute falsehood, and it shall be treated as such. Ordinary men call it clever diplomacy, but the man of God calls a spade a spade, and declares it to be falsehood, and nothing less, for he knows that it is so in the sight of God. Men who err from the right road invent pretty excuses with which to deceive themselves and others, and so quiet their consciences and maintain their credits; but their mask of falsehood is too transparent. God treads down falsehoods; they are only fit to be spurned by his feet, and crushed into the dust. How horrified must those be who have spent all their lives in contriving a confectionery religion, and then see it all trodden upon by God as a sham which he cannot endure!

119. "*Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross.*" He does not trifle with them, or handle them with kid gloves. No, he judges them to be the scum of the earth, and he treats them accordingly by putting them away. He puts them away from his church, away from their honours, away from the earth, and at last away from himself. "Depart," saith he, "ye cursed." If even a good *man* feels forced to put away the evil-doers from him, much more must the thrice holy God put away the wicked. They looked like precious metal, they were intimately mixed up with it, they were laid up in the same heap; but the Lord is a refiner, and every day he removes some of the wicked from among his people, either by making a shameful discovery of their hypocrisy or by consuming them from off the earth. They are put away as dross, never to be recalled. As the metal is the better for losing its alloy, so is the church the better for having the wicked removed. These wicked ones are "of the earth,"—"the wicked of the earth," and they have no right to be with those who are not of the world; the Lord perceives them to be out of place and injurious, and therefore he puts them away, *all* of them, leaving none of them to deteriorate his church. The process will one day be perfect; no dross will be spared, no gold will be left impure. Where shall we be when that great work is finished?

"*Therefore I love thy testimonies.*" Even the severities of the Lord excite the love of his people. If he allowed men to sin with impunity, he would not be so fully the object of our loving admiration; he is glorious in holiness because he thus rids his kingdom of rebels, and his temple of them that defile it. In these evil days, when God's punishment of sinners has become the butt of proud sceptical contentions, we may regard as a mark of the true man of God that he loves the Lord none the less, but a great deal the more because of his condign judgment of the ungodly.

120. "*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee.*" Such was his awe in the presence of the Judge of all the earth, whose judgment he had just now been considering, that he did exceedingly fear and quake. Even the grosser part of his being,—his flesh, felt a solemn dread at the thought of offending one so good and great, who would so effectually sever the wicked from among the just. Alas, poor flesh, this is the highest thing to which thou canst attain! "*And I am afraid of thy judgments.*" God's words of judgment are solemn, and his deeds of judgment are terrible; they may well make us afraid. At the thought of the Judge of all,—his piercing eye, his books of record, his day of assize, and the operations of his justice,—we may well cry for cleansed thoughts, and hearts, and ways, lest his judgments should light on us. When we see the great Refiner separating the precious from the vile, we may well feel a godly fear, lest we should be put away by him, and left to be trodden under his feet.

Love in the previous verse is quite consistent with fear in this verse: the fear which hath torment is cast out, but not the filial fear which leads to reverence and obedience.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 113 TO 120.

The fifteenth letter, SAMECH, denotes a *prop* or *pillar*, and this agrees well with the subject matter of the strophe, in which God is twice implored to uphold his servant (verses 16, 17), while the utter destruction of those who make light of his law, or encourage scepticism regarding it, may be compared to the fate of the Philistine lords, on whom Samson brought down the roof of the house where they were making merry, by overthrowing the pillars which supported it.—*Neale and Littledale.*

*Verses* 112, 113.—When David had an inclination in his heart to God's statutes, the immediate effect of it was to "*hate vain thoughts.*" We read, "*I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes*"; and it follows, "*I hate vain thoughts.*" The vanity of his heart was a burden to him. A new creature is as careful against wickedness in the head or heart, as in the life. A godly man would be purer in the sight of God than in the view of man. He knows none but God can see the wanderings of his heart or the thoughts of his head, yet he is as careful that sins should not rise up as that they should not break out.—*Stephen Charnock.*

*Verse* 113.—"*I hate vain thoughts,*" or, the evil devices; or, the double-hearted imaginations; or, the intermeddling, counter-coursing thoughts: that is to say, that kind of practice of some men, that sail with every wind, and seek still to have two strings to their bow. The Hebrew word doth properly signify boughs or branches, which shoot up perplexedly or confusedly in a tree.—*Theodore Haak*, 1618—1657.

*Verse* 113.—"*I hate vain thoughts.*" In those vacant hours which are spared from business, pleasure, company, and sleep, and which are spent in solitude, at home or abroad; unprofitable, proud, covetous, sensual, envious, or malicious imaginations, occupy the minds of ungodly men, and often infect their very dreams. These are not only sinful in themselves, indicating the state of their hearts, and as such will be brought into the account at the day of judgment; but they excite the dormant corruptions, and lead to more open and gross violations of the holy law. The carnal mind welcomes and delights to dwell upon these congenial imaginations, and to solace itself by ideal indulgences, when opportunity of other gratification is not presented, or when a man dares not commit the actual transgression. But the spiritual mind recoils at them; such thoughts will intrude from time to time, but they are unwelcome and distressing, and are immediately thrust out; while other subjects, from the word of God, are stored up in readiness to occupy the mind more profitably and pleasantly during the hours of leisure and retirement. There is no better test of our true character, than the habitual effect of "*vain thoughts*" upon our minds—whether we love and indulge them, or abhor, and watch and pray against them.—*Thomas Scott*, 1747—1821.

*Verse* 113.—"*I hate vain thoughts.*" A godly man may have roving thoughts in duty. Sad experience proves this; the thoughts will be dancing up and down in prayer. The saints are called stars; but many times in duty they are wandering stars. The heart is like quicksilver which will not fix. It is hard to tie two good thoughts together; we cannot lock our hearts so close, but that distracting thoughts, like wind, will get in. Hierom complains of himself; "Sometimes," saith he, "when I am about God's service, I am walking in the galleries, or casting up accounts." But these wandering thoughts are not allowed: "*I hate vain thoughts,*" they come as unwelcome guests, which are no sooner spied, but turned out of doors.—*Thomas Watson.*

*Verse* 113.—"*I hate.*" Every dislike of evil is not sufficient; but perfect hatred is required of us against all sorts and degrees of sin.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 113.—"*Vain thoughts.*" The word is used for the *opinions* of men;

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and may be applied to all heterodox opinions, human doctrines, damnable heresies; such as are inconsistent with the perfections of God, derogate from his grace, and from the person and offices of Christ; and are contrary to the word, and which are therefore rejected and abhorred by good men.—*John Gill.*

*Verse* 113.—"*Vain thoughts.*" Hebrew, *seäphim*, haltings between two opinions. See 1 Kings xviii. 21. Hence it signifies *sceptical doubts.*—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

*Verse* 113.—"*Vain thoughts.*" Our thoughts are set upon trifles and frivolous things, neither tending to our own profit nor the benefit of others: "The heart of the wicked is little worth;" all their debates, conceits, musings, are of no value: for all their thoughts are taken up about childish vanity and foolish conceits. "The thought of foolishness is sin" (Prov. xxiv. 9); not only the thought of wickedness, but foolishness. Thoughts are the first-born of the soul, the immediate issues of the mind; yet we lavish them away upon every trifle. Follow men all the day long, and take account of their thoughts. Oh! what madness and folly are in all the musings they are conscious of: "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity" (Ps. xciv. 11). If we did judge as God judges, all the thoughts, reasonings, discourses of the mind, if they were set down in a table, we might write at the bottom, Here is the sum and total account of all,—nothing but vanity.

The sins that do most usually engross and take up our thoughts are,

1st. Uncleanness. Speculative wickedness makes way for active: "Hath committed adultery . . . . in his heart" (Matt. v. 28). There is a polluting ourselves by our thoughts, and this sin usually works that way.

2ndly. Revenge. Liquors are soured when long kept; so, when we dwell upon discontents, they turn to revenge. Purposes of revenge are most sweet and pleasant to carnal nature: "Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually" (Prov. vi. 14), that is to say, he is full of revengeful and spiteful thoughts.

3rdly. Envy. It is a sin that feeds upon the mind. Those songs of the women, that Saul had slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands, they ran in Saul's mind, therefore he hated David (1 Sam. xviii. 9). Envy is an evil disease that dwelleth in the heart, and betrays itself mostly in thoughts.

4thly. Pride. Either pride in the desires or pride in the mind, either vain-glory or self-conceit; this is entertaining our hearts with whispers of vanity: therefore it is said, "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts" (Luke i. 51): proud men are full of imaginations.

5thly. Covetousness, which is nothing but vain musings and exercises of the heart: "A heart they have exercised with covetous practices" (2 Peter ii. 14). And it withdraws the heart in the very time of God's worship: "Their heart goeth after their covetousness" (Ezek. xxxiii. 31).

6thly. Distrust is another thing which usually takes up our thoughts—distracting motions against God's providence.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 113.—"*Vain thoughts.*" Let us see what *vanity* is. Take it in all the acceptations of it, it is true of our thoughts that they are "*vain.*"

1. It is taken for *unprofitableness.* So, Eccles. i. 2, 3, "All is vain," because there is "no profit in them under the sun." Such are our thoughts by nature; the wisest of them will not stand us in any stead in time of need, in time of temptation, distress of conscience, day of death or judgment: 1 Cor. ii. 6, "All the wisdom of the wise comes to nought"; Prov. x. 20. "The heart of the wicked is little worth," not a penny for them all.

2. Vanity is taken for *lightness.* "Lighter than vanity," is a phrase used, Ps. lxii. 9; and whom is it spoken of? Of men; and if anything in them be lighter than other, it is their *thoughts*, which swim in the uppermost parts, float at the top, are as the scum of the heart. When all the best, and

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wisest, and deepest, and solidest thoughts in Belshazzar, a prince, were weighed, they were found too light, Dan. v. 27.

3. Vanity is put for *folly*. So, Prov. xii. 11, "vain men" is made all one with men "void of understanding." Such are our thoughts. Among other evils which are said to "come out of the heart" (Mark vii. 22), ἀφροσύνη is reckoned as one, "foolishness"; that is, thoughts that are such as madmen have, and fools—nothing to the purpose, of which there can be made no use.

4. Vanity is put for *inconstancy* and frailty; therefore vanity and a shadow are made synonymous, Ps. cxliv. 4. Such are our thoughts, flitting and perishing, as bubbles: Ps. cxlvi. 4, "All their thoughts perish."

5. Lastly, they are *wicked and sinful*. Vanity is [Jer. iv. 14] yoked with wickedness, and vain men and sons of Belial are all one, 2 Chron. xiii. 7. And such are our thoughts by nature: Prov. xxiv. 9, "The thought of foolishness is sin." And therefore a man is to be humbled for a proud thought.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

*Verse* 113.—"*But thy law do I love.*" Ballast your heart with a love to God. Love will, by a pleasing violence, bind down our thoughts: if it doth not establish our minds, they will be like a cork, which, with a light breath, and a short curl of water, shall be tossed up and down from its station. Scholars that love learning will be continually hammering upon some notion or other which may further their progress, and as greedily clasp it as the iron will its beloved loadstone. He that is "winged with a divine love" to Christ will have frequent glances and flights toward him, and will start out from his worldly business several times in a day to give him a visit. Love, in the very working, is a settling grace; it increaseth our delight in God, partly by the sight of his amiableness, which is cleared to us in the very act of loving; and partly by the recompences he gives to the affectionate carriage of his creature; both which will prevent the heart's giving entertainment to such loose companions as evil thoughts.—*Stephen Charnock.*

*Verses* 113, 114.—When David was able to vouch his love to the command, he did not question his title to the promise. Here he asserts his sincere affection to the precepts: "*I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.*" Mark. he doth not say he is *free* from vain thoughts, but he "hates" them, he likes their company no better than one would a pack of thieves that break into his house. Neither saith he that he *fully kept* the law, but he "*loved*" the law even when he failed of exact obedience to it. Now from this testimony his conscience brought in for his love to the law, his faith acts clearly and strongly on the promise in the next words, "*Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.*"—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse* 114.—"*Thou art my hiding place and my shield,*" etc. From vain thoughts and vain persons the Psalmist teaches us to fly, by prayer, to God, as our Refuge and Protector. This course a believer will as naturally take, in the hour of temptation and danger, as the offspring of the hen, on perceiving a bird of prey hovering over their heads, retire to their "*hiding-place,*" under the wings of the dam; or as the warrior opposeth his "*shield*" to the darts which are aimed at him.—*George Horne.*

*Verse* 114.—"*Thou art my hiding place.*" Christ hath all qualifications that may fit him for this work [of being a *hiding-place* to believers].

1. He hath *strength*. A hiding-place must be *locus munitissimus*. Paper houses will never be good hiding-places. Houses made of reeds or rotten timber will not be fit places for men to hide themselves in. Jesus Christ is a place of strength. He is the Rock of Ages: His name is "the Mighty God," Isaiah ix. 6.

2. He hath *height*. A hiding-place must be *locus excelsissimus*. Your low houses are soon scaled. Jesus Christ is a high place; he is as high as heaven. He is the Jacob's ladder that reacheth from earth to heaven:

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Gen. xxviii. 12. He is too high for men, too high for devils; no creature can scale these high walls.

8. He hath *secret places.* A hiding-place must be *locus abditissimus.* The more secret, the more safe. Now, Jesus Christ hath many secret chambers that no creatures can ever find: Cant. ii. 14, "O my dove, that art in the secret places of the stairs." As Christ hath hidden comforts which no man knows but he that receiveth them; so he hath hidden places of secresy which none can find out but he that dwells in them. "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut the doors upon thee" (Isaiah xxvi. 20).

4. Christ is *faithful.* He that will hide others had need be very faithful. A false-hearted protector is worse than an open pursuer. "Will the men of Keilah deliver me up?" saith David; "They will deliver thee up," saith the Lord. But now Christ is faithful: Rev. iii. 14, he is "the faithful witness;" he cannot be bribed to surrender up any creature that comes to hide himself with him. Christ will die before he will betray his trust.

5. Christ is *diligent.* Diligence is as necessary in those that will hide others, as faithfulness. A sleepy guard may betray a castle or garrison as well as a faithless guard. But Jesus Christ is very diligent and watchful, he hath his intelligencers abroad; yea, his own eyes run to and fro in the earth, to see what contrivances are made and set on foot against those who are hid with him: Ps. cxxi. 3, 4, "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth."—*Ralph Robinson* (1614—1655), *in* "*Christ All in All.*"

*Verse* 114.—"*Hiding place.*" The first word in the verse means properly a secret, or a secret place.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verse* 114.—"*My shield.*" Good people are safe under God's protection; he is their "strength and their shield"; their "help and their shield"; their "sun and their shield"; their "shield and their great reward"; and here, their "*hiding place and their shield.*"—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 114.—"*Shield.*" The excellency and properties of a shield lie in these things:—1. In the largeness and breadth of it, in that it hides and covers the person that weareth it from all darts that are flung at him, so as they cannot reach him: Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield (Ps. v. 12). 2. The excellence of a shield lies in that it is hard and impenetrable. So this answers to the invincible power of God's providence, by which he can break the assaults of all enemies; and such a shield is God to his people: "My shield, and he in whom I trust" (Ps. cxliv. 2). 3. Shall I add one thing more? Stones and darts flung upon a hard shield are beaten back upon him that flings them; so God beats back the evil upon his enemies and the enemies of his people: "Bring them down, O Lord, our shield" (Ps. lix. 11).—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 114.—"*I hope in thy word.*" Of all the ingredients that sweeten the cup of human life, there is none more rich or powerful than *hope.* Its absence embitters the sweetest lot; its presence alleviates the deepest woe. Surround me with all the joys which memory can awaken or possession bestow,—without hope it is not enough. In the absence of hope there is sadness in past and present joys—sadness in the thought that the past is past, and that the present is passing too. But though you strip me of all the joys the past or the present can confer, if the morrow shineth bright with hope, I am glad amid my woe. Of all the busy motives that stir this teeming earth, hope is the busiest. It is the sweetest balm that soothes our sorrows, the brightest beam that gilds our pleasures. Hope is the noblest offspring, the first born, the last buried child of foreseeing and forecasting man. Without it the unthinking cattle may be content amid present plenty. But without it reflecting man should not, cannot be truly happy.—*William Grant* (1814—1876), *in* "*Christ our Hope, and other Sermons.*"

*Verses* 114, 115.—"*Thou art my hiding place.*" "*Depart from me, ye evil doers.*" Safe and quiet in his hiding-place, David deprecates all attempts

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to disturb his peace. The society, therefore, of the ungodly is intolerable to him, and he cannot forbear frowning them from his presence. He had found them to be opposed to his best interests; and he feared their influence in shaking his determination of obedience to his God. Indeed, when have the Lord's people failed to experience such society to be a prevailing hindrance alike to the enjoyment and to the service of God?—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 115.—"*Depart from me, ye evil doers,*" etc. As if he had said, talk no more of it, save your breath, I am resolved on my course, I have sworn, and am steadfastly purposed to keep the commandments of my God; with God's help, there will I hold me, and all the world shall not wrest me from it.—*Robert Sanderson*, 1587—1663.

*Verse* 115.—"*Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity,*" etc. It is common to sin for company, and that cup usually goeth round, and is handed from one to another. It is therefore wise to quit the company which is infected by sin. It can bring thee no benefit. At least evil company will abate the good in thee. The herb of grace will never thrive in such a cold soil. How poorly doth the good corn grow which is compassed about with weeds! Cordials and restoratives will do little good to the natural body, whilst it aboundeth with ill-humours. Ordinances are little effectual to souls which are distempered with such noxious inmates. It is said of the mountain Kadish, that whatsoever vine be planted near it, it causeth it to wither and die: it is exceeding rare for saints to thrive near such pull-backs. It is difficult, even to a miracle, to keep God's commandments and evil company too; therefore when David would marry himself to God's commands, to love them, and live with them, for better for worse, all his days, he is forced to give a bill of divorce to wicked companions, knowing that otherwise the match could never be made: "*Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, for I will keep the commandments of my God.*" As if he had said, Be it known unto you, O sinners, that I am striking a hearty covenant with God's commands; I like them so well, that I am resolved to give myself up to them, and to please them well in all things, which I can never do unless ye depart; ye are like a strumpet, which will steal away the love from the true wife. I cannot, as I ought, obey my God's precepts, whilst ye abide in my presence; therefore depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, for I will keep the commandments of my God.—*George Swinnock.*

*Verse* 115.—"*Depart from me, ye evil doers.*" Woe be to the wicked man, and woe to those who adhere to him and associate with him, saith *Ben Sira.* And even the pagans of old thought that a curse went along with those who kept evil company. To inhabit, or to travel with an impious man, and one not beloved of the gods, was held by them to be unlucky and unfortunate.

> Vetabo qui Cereris sacrum
> Vulgavit, sub isdem
> Sit trabibus, fragilemque mecum
> Solvat phaselum,

as Horace speaks.*

To dwell under the same roof, or to sail in the same yacht or pleasure-boat with profane persons was deemed unsafe and dangerous by men of Pagan principles. How much more, then, ought Christians to be thoroughly persuaded of the mischief and danger of conversing with wicked men? It can no ways be safe to hold correspondence with them. Yea, we are in great danger all the while we are with them. You have heard, I suppose, who it was that would not stay in the bath so long as an arch-heretic was there. It was St. John the Evangelist; he would not (as

* They who mysteries reveal
Beneath my roof shall never live,
Shall never hoist with me the doubtful sail.

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*Irenæus* acquaints us) remain in that place because *Cerinthus*, who denied the divinity of Christ, was then present there. That holy man thought no place was safe where such persons are.

Therefore be mindful of the Apostle's exhortation, and "Come out from among them" (2 Cor. vi. 17); listen to that voice from heaven: "Come out, that ye be not partakers of their sins, and that ye receive not of their plagues." Separate yourselves from them, lest you not only indamage your souls, but your bodies, lest some remarkable judgment arrest you here, and lest the divine vengeance more furiously assault you hereafter. The fanciful poets tell us that *Theseus* and *Perithous* (a pair of intimate friends) loved one another so well that they went down to hell together. I am sure it is no poetical fiction that many do thus; that is to say, that they perish together, and descend into the bottomless pit for company's sake.—*John Edwards* (1637—1716), *in* "*Theologia Reformata.*"

*Verse* 115. —Depart from them that depart from God.—*T. Manton.*

*Verse* 115.—"*Of my God.*" As a man can esteem of anything which he knows is his own; so if once he know that God is his, he cannot but love him, and carefully obey him: neither is it possible that any man can give to God hearty and permanent service, who is not persuaded to say with David, *He is my God.* All the pleasures, all the terrors of the world cannot sunder that soul from God, who can truly say, *The Lord is my God.*—*W. Cowper.*

*Verse* 116.—"*Uphold me.*" A kite soaring on high is in a situation quite foreign to its nature; as much as the soul of man is when raised above this lower world to high and heavenly pursuits. A person at a distance sees not how it is kept in its exalted situation: he sees not the wind that blows it, nor the hand that holds it, nor the string by whose instrumentality it is held. But all of these powers are necessary to its preservation in that preternatural state. If the wind were to sink it would fall. It has nothing whatever in itself to uphold itself; it has the same tendency to gravitate towards the earth that it ever had; and if left for a moment to itself it would fall. Thus it is with the soul of every true believer. It has been raised by the Spirit of God to a new, a preternatural, a heavenly state; and in that state it is upheld by an invisible and Almighty hand, through the medium of faith. And upheld it shall be, but not by any power in itself. If left for a moment it would fall as much as ever. Its whole strength is in God alone; and its whole security is in the unchangeableness of his nature, and in the efficacy of his grace. In a word, "It is kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation."—*From* "*The Book of Illustrations,*" *by H. G. Salter*, 1840.

*Verse* 116.—"*That I may live.*" The life of a Christian stands in this, to have his soul quickened by the spirit of grace. For as the presence of the soul quickens the body, and the departure thereof brings instant death: and the body without it is but a dead lump of clay: so it is the presence of God's Spirit which giveth life to the soul of man. And this life is known by these two notable effects; for first, it brings a joyful sense of God's mercy; and next, a spiritual disposition to spiritual exercises. And without this, pretend a man what he will, he is but the image of a Christian, looking somewhat like him, but not quickened by his life.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 116.—"*That I may live.*" The children of God think they have no life if they live not in God's life. For if we think we are alive, because we see, so do the brute beasts; if we think we are alive because we hear, so do the cattle; if we think we are alive because we eat and drink, or sleep, so do beasts; if we think we live because we do reason and confer, so do the heathen. The life of God's children is the death of sin; for where sin is alive, there that part is dead unto God. . . . . God's children, finding themselves dull and slow to good things, when they cannot either rejoice

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in the promises of God, or find their inward man delighted with the law of God, think themselves to be dead.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 117.—"*Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.*" Not only the consciousness of my weakness, but the danger of the slippery path before me, reminds me, that the safety of every moment depends upon the upholding power of my faithful God. The ways of temptation are so many and imperceptible—the influence of it so appalling—the entrance into it so deceitful, so specious, so insensible—and my own weakness and unwatchfulness are so unspeakable—that I can do nothing but go on my way, praying at every step, "*Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.*"—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 117.—"*Hold thou me up.*" Three things made David afraid. First, great temptation without; for from every air the wind of temptation blows upon a Christian. Secondly, great corruption within. Thirdly, examples of other worthy men that had fallen before him, and are written for us: not that we should learn to fall, but to fear lest we fall. These three should always hold us humble, according to that warning, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 117.—"*Up,*" up above the littlenesses in which I have lived too long,—above the snares which have so often caught me,—above the stumbling-blocks upon which I have so often fallen,—above the world, —above myself,—higher than I have ever reached yet,—above the level of my own mortality: worthy of thee,—worthy of the blood, with which I have been bought,—nearer to heaven,—nearer to thee,—"*hold thou me up.*"

God's methods of holding his people up are many. Sometimes it is by the preacher's word, when the word comes fitly spoken to the heart and conscience. May God, in his infinite condescension, enable his servants in this church so to hold you up. Sometimes it is by the ordained means and sacraments which his grace commanded. Sometimes it is by the efficacy of the Holy Scriptures, when some passage in your own room strikes the mind, just in season; or the stay of some sweet promise comes in sustainingly to your spirit. Sometimes by the simple inworking of the Holy Ghost in a man's own thoughts, as he will work,—"Uphold me with thy free spirit." Sometimes by the ministration of angels,—"They shall hold thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Sometimes by putting you very low indeed, making you feel that the safe place is the valley. There is no elevation like the elevation of abasement. Sometimes by severe discipline to brace up the heart, and strengthen it, and make it independent of external things. Sometimes by heavy affliction, which is the grasp of his hand, that he may hold you tighter. Sometimes by putting into your heart to think the exact thing that you need,—to pray the very prayer which he intends at the moment to grant. Sometimes by appearing to let you go, and forsake you, while at the same time—like the Syro-Phœnician woman—he is giving you the wish to hold on that he may give you the more at the last.—*James Vaughan, of Brighton,* 1877.

*Verse* 117.—"*I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.*" I will employ myself, so some; I will delight myself, so others; in thy statutes. If God's right hand uphold us, we must in his strength go on in our duty, both with diligence and with pleasure.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 118.—"*Thou hast trodden down,*" etc. David here, by a new meditation, confirms himself in the course of godliness: for considering the judgments of God, executed according to his word in all ages upon the wicked, he resolves so much the more to fear God and keep his testimonies. Thus the judgments of God, executed on others, should be awe-bands to keep us from sinning after their similitude.

The Lord in chastising his own children takes them in hand like a father to correct them; but when his wrath is kindled against the wicked he

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tramples them under his feet, as vile creatures which are no account with him.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 118.—"*Thou hast trodden down.*" The Septuagint, ἐξουδένωσας, *ad nihil deduxisti;* thou hast brought to nothing; Aquila, *confixisti,* thou hast stricken through: Symmachus, ἀπῆλεγξας, *reprobasti,* thou hast disproved; the Vulgate, *sprevisti,* thou hast contemned; Apollinarius, ἀθέριξας, *parvi pependisti,* thou hast little esteemed: all to the same purpose. The phrase of treading under foot, used by us, implies, 1. A full punishment; 2. A disgraceful one. 1. A full punishment. God will pull them down from their altitudes, even to the dust, though never so high and proudly exalting themselves against God. A full conquest of enemies is thus often expressed in Scripture. The Assyrian is said "to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets" (Isai. x. 6). 2. It implies a disgraceful punishment: "Until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Ps. cx. 1); an expression used to show the ignominy and contempt God will put upon them. Thus Sapores, the king of Persia, trampled upon Valentinian the emperor, and Tamerlane made Bajazet his footstool. The meaning is, God will not only bring them under, but reduce them to an abject and contemptible condition. So Chrysostom on the text expoundeth this phrase, that God will make them ἐπονειδιστους καὶ καταγελαστους, ignominious and contemptible. They shall not go off honourably, but with scorn and confusion of face, miserably broken.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 118.—"*Thou hast trodden down,*" etc. There is a disposition to merge all the characteristics of the Divinity into one; and while with many of our most eminent writers, the exuberant goodness, the soft and yielding benignity, the mercy that overlooks and makes liberal allowance for the infirmities of human weakness, have been fondly and most abundantly dwelt upon—there has been what the French would call, if not a studied, at least an actually observed *reticence,* on the subject of his truth and purity and his hatred of moral evil. There can be no government without a law; and the question is little entertained—how are the violations of that law to be disposed of? Every law has its sanctions—the hopes of proffered reward on the one hand, the fears of threatened vengeance on the other. Is the vengeance to be threatened only, but never to be executed? Is guilt only to be dealt with by proclamations that go before, but never by punishments that are to follow? . . . . Take away from jurisprudence its penalties, or, what were still worse, let the penalties only be denounced but never exacted; and we reduce the whole to an unsubstantial mockery. The fabric of moral government falls to pieces; and, instead of a great presiding authority in the universe, we have a subverted throne and a degraded Sovereign. . . . . If there is only to be the parade of a judicial economy, without any of its power or its performance; if the truth is only to be kept in the promises of reward, but as constantly to be receded from in the threats of vengeance; if the judge is thus to be lost in the overweening parent—there is positively nothing of a moral government over us but the name, we are not the subjects of God's authority; we are the fondlings of his regard. Under a system like this, the whole universe would drift, as it were, into a state of anarchy; and, in the uproar of this wild misrule, the King who sitteth on high would lose his hold on the creation that he had formed.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

*Verse* 118—"*For their deceit is falsehood.*" The true sense of the passage is, "for their cunning hath been fallacious," that is, it hath deceived themselves and brought on their ruin.—*Samuel Horsley,* 1733—1806.

*Verse* 118.—"*Their deceit is falsehood.*" He means not here of that deceit whereby the wicked deceive others, but that whereby they deceive themselves. And this is two-fold: first, in that they look for a good in sin, which sin deceitfully promiseth, but they shall never find. Next, that they flatter themselves with a vain conceit to escape judgment, which shall assuredly overtake them.—*William Cowper.*

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*Verse* 119.—"*Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross.*" The godly and the wicked live together in the visible church, as dross and good metal; but God, who is the purger of his church, will not fail by diversity of trials and judgments to put difference between them, and at last will make a perfect separation of them, and cast away the wicked as refuse.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 119.—God's judgments upon others may be a necessary act of love to us. They are purged out as "*dross*," that they may not infect us by their example, or molest us by their persecutions or oppressions. Now, the more we are befriended in this kind, the more we are bound to serve God cheerfully: "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life": Luke i. 74, 75. The world is one of those enemies, or the wicked of the earth; therefore we should serve him faithfully.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 119.—"*Thou puttest away all the wicked.*" Many ways are wicked men taken away; sometime by the hand of other men, sometime by their own hand. The Philistines slew not Saul, but forced him to slay himself; yet the eye of faith ever looks to the finger of God, and sees that the fall of the wicked is the work of God.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 119.—"*The wicked of the earth.*" Why are they thus characterized? Because here they flourish; their names "shall be written in the earth" (Jer. xvii. 13); they grow great and of good reckoning and account here. Judas had the bag; they prosper in the world: "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world" (Ps. lxxiii. 12). Here they are respected: "They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them" (1 John iv. 5). Their hearts and minds are in the world (Matt. vi. 19, 20). It is their natural frame to be worldly, they only savour the things of the world; preferment, honour, greatness, it is their *unum magnum;* here is their pleasure, and here is their portion, their hope, and their happiness. A child of God looketh for another inheritance, immortal and undefiled.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 119.—"*Like dross.*" The men of this world esteem God's children as the offscourings of the earth; so Paul (a chosen vessel of God) was disesteemed of men; but ye see here what the wicked are, in God's account, but dross indeed, which is the refuse of gold or silver. Let this confirm the godly against the contempt of men: only the Lord hath in his own hand the balance which weigheth men according as they are.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 119.—"*Dross.*" 1. The *dross* obscures the lustre and glory of the metal, yea, covers it up, so that it appears not; rust and filth compass and hide the gold, so that neither the nature nor lustre of it can be seen. 2. *Dross* is a deceiving thing. It is like metal, but is not metal; the dross of silver is like it, and so the dross of gold is like gold, but the dross is neither silver nor gold. 3. *Dross* is not bettered by the fire: put it into the fire time after time, it abides so still. 4. *Dross* is a worthless thing. It is of no value—base, vile, contemptible. 5. It is useless, and to be rejected. 6. *Dross* is an offensive thing: rust eats into the metal, endangers it, and makes the goldsmith to kindle the fire, to separate it from the gold and silver.—*Condensed from William Greenhill.*

*Verse* 119.—"*Thy testimonies.*" So, very frequently, he calleth God's word, wherein there are both commands and promises: the commandments of God appertain to all, his testimonies belong to his children only; whereby more strictly, I understand his promises containing special declarations of his love and favour toward his own in Christ Jesus.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 120.—"*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee.*" Instead of exulting over those who fell under God's displeasure he humbleth himself. What

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we read and hear of the judgments of God upon wicked people should make us (1) To reverence his terrible majesty, and to stand in awe of him. Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? 1 Sam. vi. 20. (2) To fear lest we offend him, and become obnoxious to his wrath. Good men have need to be restrained from sin by the terrors of the Lord; especially when judgment begins at the house of God, and hypocrites are discovered, and put away as dross.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 120.—"*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee,*" etc. At the presence of Jehovah, when he appeareth in judgment, the earth trembleth and is still. His best servants are not exempted from an awful dread, upon such occasions; scenes of this kind, shown in vision to the prophets, cause their flesh to quiver, and all their bones to shake. Encompassed with a frail body, and a sinful world, we stand in need of every possible tie; and the affections both of fear and love must be employed, to restrain us from transgression; we must, at the same time, "love God's testimonies, and fear his judgments."—*George Horne.*

*Verse* 120.—"*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee,*" etc. In prayer, in the evening I had such near and terrific views of God's judgments upon sinners in hell, that my flesh trembled for fear of them. . . . . I flew trembling to Jesus Christ as if the flames were taking hold of me! Oh! Christ will indeed save me or else I perish.—*Henry Martyn*, 1781—1812.

*Verse* 120.—"*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee.*" Familiarity with men breeds contempt; familiarity with God, not so: none reverence the Lord more than they who know him best and are most familiar with him.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 120 *with* 116.—"*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; I am afraid.*" . . . "*Let me not be ashamed of my hope.*" True religion consists in a proper mixture of *fear* of God, and of *hope* in his mercy; and wherever either of these is entirely wanting, there can be no true religion. God has joined these things, and we ought by no means to put them asunder. He cannot take pleasure in those who fear him with a slavish fear, without hoping in his mercy, because they seem to consider him as a cruel and tyrannical being, who has no mercy or goodness in his nature; and, besides, they implicitly charge him with falsehood, by refusing to believe and hope in his invitations and offers of mercy. On the other hand, he cannot be pleased with those who pretend to hope in his mercy without fearing him; for they insult him by supposing that there is nothing in him which ought to be feared; and, in addition to this, they make him a liar, by disbelieving his awful threatenings denounced against sinners, and call in question his authority, by refusing to obey him. Those only who both fear him and hope in his mercy, give him the honour that is due to his name.—*Edward Payson.*

*Verse* 120.—"*Trembleth*" or shuddereth, strictly used of the hair as standing erect in terror (comp. Job iv. 15).—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 121 TO 128.

I HAVE done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.

122 Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.

123 Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.

124 Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.

125 I *am* thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

126 *It is* time for *thee*, LORD, to work: *for* they have made void thy law.

127 Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.

128 Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts *concerning* all *things to be* right; *and* I hate every false way.

121. "*I have done judgment and justice.*" This was a great thing for an Eastern ruler to say at any time, for these despots mostly cared more for gain than justice. Some of them altogether neglected their duty, and would not even do judgment at all, preferring their pleasures to their duties; and many more of them sold their judgments to the highest bidders by taking bribes, or regarding the persons of men. Some rulers gave neither judgment nor justice, others gave judgment without justice, but David gave judgment and justice, and saw that his sentences were carried out. He could claim before the Lord that he had dealt out even-handed justice, and was doing so still. On this fact he founded a plea with which he backed the prayer—"*Leave me not to mine oppressors.*" He who, as far as his power goes, has been doing right, may hope to be delivered from his superiors when attempts are made by them to do him wrong. If I will not oppress others, I may hopefully pray that others may not oppress me. A course of upright conduct is one which gives us boldness in appealing to the Great Judge for deliverance from the injustice of others. Nor is this kind of pleading to be censured as self-righteous: when we are dealing with God as to our shortcomings, we use a very different tone from that with which we face the censures of our fellow-men; when they are in the question, and we are guiltless towards them, we are justified in pleading our innocence.

122. "*Be surety for thy servant for good.*" Answer for me. Do not leave thy poor servant to die by the hand of his enemy and thine. Take up my interests and weave them with thine own, and stand for me. As my Master, undertake thy servants' cause, and represent me before the faces of haughty men till they see what an august ally I have in the Lord my God.

"*Let not the proud oppress me.*" Thine interposition will answer the purpose of my rescue: when the proud see that thou art my advocate they will hide their heads. We should have been crushed beneath our proud adversary the devil if our Lord Jesus had not stood between us and the accuser, and become a surety for us. It is by his suretyship that we escape like a bird from the snare of the fowler. What a blessing to be able to leave our matters in our Surety's hands, knowing that all will be well, since he has an answer for every accuser, a rebuke for every reviler.

Good men dread oppression, for it makes even a wise man mad, and they send up their cries to heaven for deliverance; nor shall they cry in vain, for

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the Lord will undertake the cause of his servants, and fight their battles against the proud. The word "servant" is wisely used as a plea for favour for himself, and the word "proud" as an argument against his enemies. It seems to be inevitable that proud men should become oppressors, and that they should take most delight in oppressing really gracious men.

123. "*Mine eyes fail for thy salvation.*" He wept, waited, and watched for God's saving hand, and these exercises tried the eyes of his faith till they were almost ready to give out. He looked to God alone, he looked eagerly, he looked long, he looked till his eyes ached. The mercy is, that if our eyes fail, God does not fail, nor do *his* eyes fail. Eyes are tender things, and so are our faith, hope and expectancy: the Lord will not try them above what they are able to bear. "*And for the word of thy righteousness:*" a word that would silence the unrighteous words of his oppressors. His eyes as well as his ears waited for the Lord's word: he looked to see the divine word come forth as a fiat for his deliverance. He was "waiting for the verdict"—the verdict of righteousness itself. How happy are we if we have righteousness on our side; for then that which is the sinners' terror is our hope, that which the proud dread is our expectation and desire. David left his reputation entirely in the Lord's hand, and was eager to be cleared by the word of the Judge rather than by any defence of his own. He knew that he had done right, and, therefore, instead of avoiding the supreme court, he begged for the sentence which he knew would work out his deliverance. He even watched with eager eyes for the judgment and the deliverance, the word of righteousness from God which meant salvation to himself.

124. "*Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy.*" Here he recollects himself: although before men he was so clear that he could challenge the word of righteousness, yet before the Lord, as his servant, he felt that he must appeal to mercy. We feel safest here. Our heart has more rest in the cry, "God be merciful to me," than in appealing to justice. It is well to be able to say, "I have done judgment and justice," and then to add in all lowliness, yet "deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy." The title of servant covers a plea; a master should clear the character of his servant if he be falsely accused, and rescue him from those who would oppress him; and, moreover, the master should show mercy to a servant, even if he deal severely with a stranger. The Lord condescendingly deals, or has communications with his servants, not spurning them, but communing with them; and this he does in a tender and merciful way, for in any other form of dealing we should be crushed into the dust. "*And teach me thy statutes.*" This will be one way of dealing with us in mercy. We may expect a master to teach his own servant the meaning of his own orders. Yet since our ignorance arises from our own sinful stupidity, it is great mercy on God's part that he condescends to instruct us in his commands. For our ruler to become our teacher is an act of great grace, for which we cannot be too grateful. Among our mercies this is one of the choicest.

125. "*I am thy servant.*" This is the third time he has repeated this title in this one section: he is evidently fond of the name, and conceives it to be a very effective plea. We who rejoice that we are sons of God are by no means the less delighted to be his servants. Did not the firstborn Son assume the servant's form and fulfil the servant's labour to the full? What higher honour can the younger brethren desire than to be made like the Heir of all things?

"*Give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.*" In the previous verse he sought teaching; but here he goes much further, and craves for understanding. Usually, if the instructor supplies the teaching, the pupil finds the understanding; but in our case we are far more dependent, and must beg for understanding as well as teaching: this the ordinary teacher

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cannot give, and we are thrice happy that our Divine Tutor can furnish us with it. We are to confess ourselves fools, and then our Lord will make us wise, as well as give us knowledge. The best understanding is that which enables us to render perfect obedience and to exhibit intelligent faith, and it is this which David desires,—"understanding, that I may know thy testimonies." Some would rather not know these things; they prefer to be at ease in the dark rather than possess the light which leads to repentance and diligence. The servant of God longs to know in an understanding manner all that the Lord reveals of man and to man; he wishes to be so instructed that he may apprehend and comprehend that which is taught him. A servant should not be ignorant concerning his master, or his master's business; he should study the mind, will, purpose, and aim of him whom he serves, for so only can he complete his service; and as no man knows these things so well as his master himself, he should often go to him for instructions, lest his very zeal should only serve to make him the greater blunderer.

It is remarkable that the Psalmist does not pray for understanding through acquiring knowledge, but begs of the Lord first that he may have the gracious gift of understanding, and then may obtain the desired instruction. All that we know before we have understanding is apt to spoil us and breed vanity in us; but if there be first an understanding heart, then the stores of knowledge enrich the soul, and bring neither sin nor sorrow therewith. Moreover, this gift of understanding acts also in the form of discernment and thus the good man is preserved from hoarding up that which is false and dangerous: he knows what are and what are not the testimonies of the Lord.

126. "*It is time for thee*, LORD, *to work: for they have made void thy law.*" David was a servant, and therefore it was always his time to work: but being oppressed by a sight of man's ungodly behaviour, he feels that his Master's hand is wanted, and therefore he appeals to him to work against the working of evil. Men make void the law of God by denying it to be his law, by promulgating commands and doctrines in opposition to it, by setting up tradition in its place, or by utterly disregarding and scorning the authority of the lawgiver. Then sin becomes fashionable, and a holy walk is regarded as a contemptible puritanism; vice is styled pleasure, and vanity bears the bell. Then the saints sigh for the presence and power of their God: Oh for an hour of the King upon the throne and the rod of iron! Oh for another Pentecost with all its wonders, to reveal the energy of God to gainsayers, and make them see that there is a God in Israel! Man's extremity, whether of need or sin, is God's opportunity. When the earth was without form and void, the Spirit came and moved upon the face of the waters; should he not come when society is returning to a like chaos? When Israel in Egypt were reduced to the lowest point, and it seemed that the covenant would be void, then Moses appeared and wrought mighty miracles; so, too, when the church of God is trampled down, and her message is derided, we may expect to see the hand of the Lord stretched out for the revival of religion, the defence of the truth, and the glorifying of the divine name. The Lord can work either by judgments which hurl down the ramparts of the foe; or by revivals which build up the walls of his own Jerusalem. How heartily may we pray the Lord to raise up new evangelists, to quicken those we already have, to set his whole church on fire, and to bring the world to his feet. God's work is ever honourable and glorious; as for our work, it is as nothing apart from him.

127. "*Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.*" As it was God's time to work so it was David's time to love. So far from being swayed by the example of evil men, so as to join them in slighting the Scriptures, he was the rather led into a more vehement love of them. As he saw the commandments slighted by the ungodly, his heart was in



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sympathy with God, and he felt a burning affection for his holy precepts. It is the mark of a true believer that he does not depend upon others for his religion, but drinks water out of his own well, which springs up even when the cisterns of earth are all dried. Our holy poet amid a general depreciation of the law felt his own esteem of it rising so high that gold and silver sank in comparison. Wealth brings with it so many conveniences that men naturally esteem it, and gold as the symbol of it is much set by; and yet, in the judgment of the wise, God's laws are more enriching, and bring with them more comfort than all the choicest treasures. The Psalmist could not boast that he always kept the commands; but he could declare that he loved them; he was perfect in heart, and would fain have been perfect in life. He judged God's holy commands to be better than the best earthly thing, yea, better than the best sort of the best earthly thing; and this esteem was confirmed and forced into expression by those very oppositions of the world which drive hypocrites to forsake the Lord and his ways.

> "The dearer, for their rage,
> Thy words I love and own,—
> A wealthier heritage
> Than gold and precious stone."

128. "*Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right.*" Because the ungodly found fault with the precepts of God, therefore David was all the more sure of their being right. The censure of the wicked is a certificate of merit; that which they sanction we may justly suspect, but that which they abominate we may ardently admire. The good man's delight in God's law is unreserved, he believes in all God's precepts concerning all things.

"*And I hate every false way.*" Love to truth begat hatred of falsehood. This godly man was not indifferent to anything, but that which he did not love he hated. He was no chip in the porridge without flavour; he was a good lover or a good hater, but he was never a waverer. He knew what he felt, and expressed it. He was no Gallio, caring for none of the things. His detestation was as unreserved as his affection; he had not a good word for any practice which would not bear the light of truth. The fact that such large multitudes follow the broad road had no influence upon this holy man, except to make him more determined to avoid every form of error and sin. May the Holy Spirit so rule in our hearts that our affections may be in the same decided condition towards the precepts of the word.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 121 TO 128.

*Verse* 121.—This commences a new division of the Psalm indicated by the Hebrew letter *Ain*—a letter which cannot well be represented in the English alphabet, as there is, in fact, no letter in our language exactly corresponding with it. It would be best represented probably by what are called "*breathings*" in Greek.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 121.—"*I have done judgment*" against the wicked, "and *justice*" towards the good.—*Simon de Muis*, 1587—1644.

*Verse* 121.—"*I have done judgment and justice.*"—Here the view of David in his judicial capacity might present itself to us; and if so, we have David in the midst of large experience; for the words would take in a large portion of his life. How blessed were their reflections, if, after a long reign, all sovereign rulers could thus appeal unto God. It should be so; for to him all shall be accountable at last. Even although we only conceive of David as speaking in the character of a private man, the sentiment is worthy of all consideration. . . . . For parents to say this of their dealings with their children, masters of servants, a man of his neighbours, is very excellent.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 121.—"*Judgment*" and "*justice,*" are often put in Scripture for the same, and when put together, the latter is as an epithet to the former. "*I have done judgment and justice,*" that is, I have done judgment *justly*, exactly, to a hair.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse* 121.—

> Do right and be a king,
> Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
> Still to preserve thy conscious innocence,
> Nor e'er turn pale with guilt.
>
> —*Francis's Horace.*

*Verse* 121.—"If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence before God:" 1 John iii. xxi. This "testimony of conscience" has often been "the rejoicing" of the Lord's people, when suffering under unmerited reproach or "proud oppression." They have been enabled to plead it without offence in the presence of their holy, heart-searching God; nay, even when, in the near prospect of the great and final account, they might well have been supposed to shrink from the strict and unerring scrutiny of their Omniscient Judge. Perhaps, however, we are not sufficiently aware of the importance of moral integrity in connexion with our spiritual comfort. Mark the boldness which it gave David in prayer: "*I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.*"—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 121.—"*Leave me not to mine oppressors.*" That is, maintain me against those who would wrong me, because I do right; interpose thyself between me and my enemies, as if thou wert my pledge. Impartial justice upon oppressors sometimes lays judges open to oppression; but yet they who run greatest hazards in zeal for God shall find God ready to be their surety, when they pray, "*be surety for thy servant,*" as in the next verse.—*Abraham Wright.*

*Verses* 121, 122.—"*I have done judgment and justice;*" but, that I may always do it, and never fail in doing it, "*uphold thy servant unto good,*" by directing him, so that he may always relish what is good, and then the consequence will be that "*the proud will not calumniate me;*" for he that is well established "*unto good,*" and so made up that nothing but what is good and righteous will be agreeable to him, he will so persevere that he will have no reason for fearing "*the proud that calumniate him.*"—*Robert Bellarmine.*

*Verse* 122.—"*Be surety for thy servant for good.*" What David prays to God to be for him, that Christ is for all his people: Heb. vii. 22. He drew nigh to God, struck hands with him, gave his word and bond to pay the

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debts of his people; put himself in their law-place and stead, and became responsible to law and justice for them; engaged to make satisfaction for their sins, to bring in everlasting righteousness for their justification, and to preserve and keep them, and bring them safe to eternal glory and happiness; and this was being *a surety for them for good.*—*John Gill.*

*Verse* 122.—"*Be surety for thy servant for good.*" There are three expositions of this clause, as noting the end, the cause, the event. 1. Undertake for me, *ut sim bonus et justus*, so Rabbi Arama on the place; "Be surety for me *that I may be good.*" Theodoret expounds it, "Undertake that I shall make good my resolution of keeping thy law." He that enjoineth, undertaketh; though we have precepts and promises, without God's undertaking we shall never be able to perform our duty. 2. Undertake for me to help me *in doing good;* so some read it: God would not take his part in an evil cause. To commend a wrong cause to God's protection, is to provoke him to hasten our punishment, to make us serve under our oppressors; but, when we have a good cause, and a good conscience, he will own us. We cannot expect he should maintain us and bear us out in the Devil's service, wherein we have entangled ourselves by our own sin.

3. *Be with me for good:* so it is often rendered: "Shew me a token for good" (Ps. lxxxvi. 17); "Pray not for this people for good" (Jer. xiv. 11); so, "Remember me, O my God, for good" (Neh. xiii. 31). So here; "*Be surety for thy servant for good.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 122.—"*Be surety for thy servant for good.*" It is the prayer of Hezekiah in his trouble, "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me" (Isai. xxxviii. 14); it is the prayer of Job for a "daysman" to stand between him and God (Job ix. 33); it is the cry of the church before the Incarnation for the appearance of a Divine Mediator; it is the confidence of every faithful soul since that blessed time in the perpetual intercession of our Great High Priest in heaven, which is to us the pledge of future blessedness.—*Agellius and Cocceius, in Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 122.—"*Be surety for thy servant for good.*" His meaning is, Lord, thou knowest how unjustly I am calumniated and evil spoken of in many parts: where I am not present or where I may not answer for myself, Lord, answer thou for me.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 122.—"*Be surety for thy servant for good.*" The keen eye of the world may possibly not be able to affix any blot upon my outward profession; but, "if thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand?" The debt is continually accumulating, and the prospect of payment as distant as ever. I might well expect to be "left to my oppressors," until I should pay all that was due unto my Lord. But behold! "Where is the fury of the oppressor?" Isai. li. 13. The surety is found—the debt is paid—the ransom is accepted—the sinner is free. There was a voice heard in heaven—"Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24. The Son of God himself became "Surety for a stranger," and "smarted for it," Prov. xi. 15. At an infinite cost—the cost of his own precious blood—he delivered me from "*mine oppressors*"—sin—Satan—the world—death—hell.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 122.—Some observe that this is the only verse throughout the whole psalm wherein the Word is not mentioned under the name of "law," "judgments," "statutes," or the like terms, and they make this note upon it,—"Where the Law faileth, there Christ is a surety of a better testament." There are that render the words thus,—"*Dulcify, or, delight thy servant in good,*" that is, make him joyful and comfortable in the pursuit and practice of that which is good.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 123.—"*Mine eyes fail for thy salvation.*" In times of great sorrow, when the heart is oppressed with care, and when danger threatens on every

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side, the human eye expresses with amazing accuracy the distressed and anguished emotions of the soul. The posture here described is that of an individual who perceives himself surrounded with enemies of the most formidable character, who feels his own weakness and insufficiency to enter into conflict with them, but who is eagerly looking for the arrival of a devoted and powerful friend who has promised to succour him in the hour of his calamity. As his friend delays the hour of his coming, his fears and anxieties multiply, till he finds himself in the condition of one whose eyes fail and grow dim in looking for the approach of his great deliverer. In this condition was the suppliant here described,—his enemies were ready to swallow him up, and except from heaven he had no hope of final extrication. To the promises of God he betook himself, and while waiting their accomplishment, and looking with the utmost eagerness to the word of God's righteousness, he gives utterance to the desponding sentiment, "*Mine eyes fail for thy salvation.*" O for such warm and anxious desires for that great salvation, which will realize the victory over all our spiritual enemies, and enable us to shout triumphantly through all eternity in the name of our almighty Deliverer!—*John Morison.*

*Verse* 123.—"*Mine eyes fail . . . . . for the word of thy righteousness.*" Albeit the words of promise be neither performed, nor like to be performed, yet faith should justify the promise, for true and faithful.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 123.—"*For the word of thy righteousness.*" This would be the word of promised salvation, which the Lord had given in righteousness. What an amazing plea—God on the ground of his own righteousness appealed to for deliverance—and yet how true! Or this might be the word of his justice, the issuing of justice, the exercising of a righteous decision between him and his oppressors. He had looked for the Lord to interpose between them, and so to fulfil all he had promised on behalf of the believer. The Lord will vindicate his own. Are any in great difficulty; and are they waiting for the Lord to interpose, to whom they have committed their concerns? . . . . Wait on; he will not disappoint a gracious hope.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 123.—"*For the word of thy righteousness,*" or, "the word of thy *justice*"; that is to say, for the sentence of justice on my oppressors, as the first part of the verse teaches; for the passing this sentence will be equivalent to the granting the salvation which the psalmist so earnestly desired.—*George Phillips.*

*Verse* 124.—"*Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy.*" If I am a "*servant*" of God, I can bring my services before him only upon the ground of "*mercy*"; feeling that for my best performances I need an immeasurable world of mercy—pardoning—saving—everlasting mercy; and yet I am emboldened by the blood of Jesus to plead for my soul—"*Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy.*"

But then I am ignorant as well as guilty; and yet I dare not pray for divine teaching, much and hourly as I need it, until I have afresh obtained mercy. "*Mercy*" is the first blessing, not only in point of importance, but in point of order. I must seek the Lord, and know him as a Saviour, before I can go to him with any confidence to be my teacher. But when once I have found acceptance to my petition—"*Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy*"—my way will be opened to follow on my petition—"*Teach me thy statutes. Give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies*"—that I may know, walk, yea, "run in the way of thy commandments" with an enlarged heart, ver. 32. My plea is the same as I have before urged with acceptance (ver. 94)—"*I am thy servant.*"—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 124.—"*Thy mercy.*" All the year round, every hour of every day, God is richly blessing us; both when we sleep and when we wake, his mercy waits upon us. The sun may leave off shining, but our God will never cease

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to cheer his children with his love. Like a river, his loving-kindness is always flowing, with a fulness inexhaustible as his own nature, which is its source. Like the atmosphere which always surrounds the earth, and is always ready to support the life of man, the benevolence of God surrounds all his creatures; in it, as in their element, they live, and move, and have their being. Yet as the sun on summer days appears to gladden us with beams more warm and bright than at other times, and as rivers are at certain seasons swollen with the rain, and as the atmosphere itself on occasions is fraught with more fresh, more bracing, or more balmy influences than heretofore, so is it with the mercy of God; it hath its golden hours, its days of overflow, when the Lord magnifieth his grace and lifteth high his love before the sons of men.—*C. H. S.*

*Verse* 124.—"*Teach me.*" David had Nathan and Gad the prophets; and beside them, the ordinary Levites to teach him. He read the word of God diligently, and did meditate in the law night and day; but he acknowledgeth all this was nothing unless God did teach him. Other teachers speak to the ear, but God speaks to the heart: so Paul preached to Lydia, but God opened her heart. Let us pray for this grace.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 125.—"*I am thy servant; give me understanding,*" etc. I am not a stranger to thee, but thine own domestic servant; let me want no grace which may enable me to serve thee.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 125.—"*I am thy servant.*" That thou art the *servant of God*, thou shouldest regard as thy chiefest glory and blessedness.—*Martin Geier.*

*Verse* 126.—"*It is time for thee, Lord, to work.*" Was ever vessel more hopelessly becalmed in mid-ocean? or did crew ever cry with more frenzy for some favouring breeze than those should cry who man the Church of the living God? If God work not, it is certain there is nothing before the Church but the prospect of utter discomfiture and overthrow. Greater is the world than the Church if God be not in her. But if God be in her, she shall not be moved. May he help her, and that right early!

When he arises to work we know not what may be the form and fashion of his operations. He worketh according to the counsel of his own will; and who knows but that when once he awakes, and puts on his strength, it may not be confined in its results to the immediate and exclusive quickening of the spiritual life of the Church; but may be associated with providential upheavals and convulsions which will fill the heart of the world with astonishment and dismay. His spiritual kingdom does not stand in isolation. It has relations which closely involve it with the material universe, and with human society and national life. There have been times when God has worked, and the signs of his presence have been seen, in terrible shakings of the nations, in the ploughing up from their foundations of hoary injustice, in the smiting of grinding tyrannies, and in the emancipation of peoples whose life had been a long and hopeless moan. There have been times, too, and many, when he has worked through the elements of nature—through blasting and mildew, through floods and famine, through locust, caterpillar and palmer worm; through flagging commerce, with its machinery rusting in the mill and its ships rotting in the harbour. All these things are his servants. Sometimes the sleep of the world, and the Church too, is so profound that it can be broken only by agencies like the wind, or fire, or earthquake, which made the prophet shiver at the mouth of the cave, and without which the voice that followed, so still, so small and tender, would have lost much of its melting and subduing power. When society has become drugged with the Circean cup of worldliness, and the voices that come from eternity are unheeded, if not unheard, even terror has its merciful mission. The frivolous and superficial hearts of men have to be

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made serious, their idols have to be broken, their nests have to be stoned, or tossed from the trees where they had been made with so much care, and they have to be taught that if this life be all, it is but a phantom and a mockery. When the day of the Lord shall come, in which he shall begin to work, let us not marvel if it "shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low; and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." But this working of God will also take other shapes. Will it not be seen in the inspiration of the Church with faith in its own creed, so far as that creed has the warrant of the Divine word? Does the Church believe its creed? It writes it, sets it forth, sings it, defends it; but does it believe it, at least with a faith which begets either enthusiasm in itself, or respect from the world? Have not the truths which form the methodized symbols of the Church become propositions instead of living powers? Do they not lie embalmed with superstitious reverence in the ark of tradition, tenderly cherished for what they have been and done? But is it not forgotten that if they be truths they are not dead and cannot die? They are true now, or they were never true; living now, or they never lived. Time cannot touch them, nor human opinion, nor the Church's sluggishness or unbelief, for they are emanations from the Divine essence, instinct with his own undecaying life. They are not machinery which may become antiquated and obsolete and displaced by better inventions; they are not methods of policy framed for conditions which are transient, and vanishing with them; they are not scaffolding within which other and higher truth is to be reared from age to age. They are like him who is the end of our conversation, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." There is not one of them which, if the faith it awakens were but commensurate with its intrinsic worth, would not clothe the Church with a new and wondrous power. But what would be that power if that faith were to grasp them all? It would be life from the dead.—*Enoch Mellor* (1823—1881), *in "The Hem of Christ's Garment, and other Sermons."*

*Verse* 126.—"*It is time for thee*, LORD, *to work.*" עֵת expresses emphatically *the proper time* for the Lord to do his own work; as if the Psalmist had said, "It is not for us to prescribe the time and occasion for God to exercise his power, and to vindicate the authority of his own law; he does everything at the proper time, and he will at the proper season punish those '*who have made void his law*,' and who have become notorious for their impiety and wickedness."—*George Phillips.*

*Verse* 126.—"*It is time to work*," just as when the attack of some illness is becoming more severe, you hurry to the physician, that he may come more quickly, lest he should later be unable to do any good. So when the prophet saw in the Holy Spirit the rebellion of the people, their luxury, pleasures, deceits, frauds, avarice, drunkenness, he runs, for our help, to Christ, whom he knew to be alone able to remedy such sins; implores him to come, and admits of no delay.—*Ambrose, in Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 126.—"*It is time for thee*, LORD, *to work.*"—Infidelity was never more subtle, more hurtful, more plausible, perhaps more successful, than in the day in which we live. It has left the low grounds of vulgarity and coarseness and ribaldry, and entrenched itself upon the lofty heights of criticism, philology, and even science itself. It pervades to a fearful extent our popular literature; it has invested itself with the charms of poetry, to throw its spell over the public mind; it has endeavoured to enweave itself with science; and he must be little acquainted with the state of opinion in this land, who does not know that it is espoused by a large portion of the

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cultivated mind of this generation. "It is time for thee, Lord, to work." —*John Angell James*, 1785—1859.

*Verse* 126.—"*It is time for thee*, LORD, *to work*," etc. To send the Messiah, to work righteousness, to fulfil the law and vindicate the honour of it, broken by men. It was always a notion of the Jews that the time of the Messiah's coming would be when it was a time of great wickedness in the earth; and which seems to agree with the word of God, and was true in fact. See Mal. ii. 17, and iii. 1, 2, 3, 15, 16, and iv. 2.—*John Gill.*

*Verse* 126.—"*It is time for thee*, LORD, *to work*," etc. True it is, Lord, that we are not to appoint thee thy times and limits, for thou art the Ancient of Days, Time's Creator and destinator. Neither do we presume to press in at the portal of thy privy chamber, to "know the times and seasons" which thou our Father hast reserved in thine own power; yet, Lord, thou hast taught us, as to discern the face of the sky, so to descry the signs of the times, and from the cause to expect the effect which necessarily doth ensue. "Thou art a God full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Ps. ciii. 8); and thou dost sustain many wrongs of the sons of men, being crushed with their sins as a cart is laden with sheaves: but if still they continue to load thee, thou wilt ease thyself of that burden, and cast it on the ground of confusion. Thou art "slow to anger, but great in power, and wilt not surely clear the wicked" (Nahum i. 3). Thou dost for a long space hold thy peace at men's sins, and art still, and dost restrain thyself. But if men will not turn, thou wilt whet thy sword and bend thy bow, and make it ready. Patient thou art, and for a long time dost forbear thine hand; but when the forehead of sin beginneth to lose the blush of shame, when the beadroll of transgressions doth grow in score from East to West, when the cry of them pierceth above the clouds, when the height of wickedness is come unto the top, and the fruits thereof are ripe and full, then it is time for thee, Lord, to take notice of it, to awake like a giant, and to put to thine all-revenging hand.

But our sins are already ripe, yea, rotten ripe, the measure of our iniquities is full up to the brim. Doubtless our land is sunken deep in iniquity; our tongues and works have been against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory; the trial of our countenance doth testify against us (Isaiah iii. 8, 9), yea, we declare our sins as Sodom; we hide them not, the cry of our sins is exceeding grievous, the clamours of them pierce the skies, and with a loud voice roar, saying: "How long, Lord, holy and true? How long ere thou come to avenge thyself on such a nation as this?" Rev. vi. 10; Jer. ix. 9.—*George Webbe, in "A Posie of Spiritual Flowers,"* 1610.

*Verse* 126.—"*It is time for thee*, LORD." Some read it, and the original will bear it, "*It is time to work for thee, O* LORD;" it is time for every one in his place to appear on the Lord's side, against the threatening growth of profaneness and immorality. We must do what we can for the support of the sinking interests of religion, and, after all, we must beg of God to take the work into his own hands.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 126.—"*They have made void thy law.*" In the second verse of this section he complained that the proud would oppress him, now he complaineth that they destroyed the law of God. Who, then, are David's enemies, who seek to oppress him? Only such as are enemies to God, and seek to destroy his law. A great comfort have we in this, that if we love the Lord, and study in a good conscience to serve him, we can have no enemies but such as are enemies to God.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 126.—"*They have made void thy law.*" As if they would not only sin against the Law, but sin away the Law, not only withdraw themselves from the obedience of it, but drive it out of the world; they would make void and repeal the holy acts of God, that their own wicked acts might not be questioned; and lest the Law should have a power to punish them, they

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will deny it a power to rule them; that's the force of the simple word here used, as applied to highest transgressing against the Law of God.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verses* 126, 127.—Everything betters a saint. Not only ordinances, word, sacraments, holy society, but even sinners and their very sinning. Even these draw forth their graces into exercise, and put them upon godly, broken-hearted mourning. A saint sails with every wind. As the wicked are hurt by the best things, so the godly are bettered by the worst. Because "*they have made void thy law, therefore do I love thy commandments.*" Holiness is the more owned by the godly, the more the world despiseth it. The most eminent saints were those of Cæsar's (Nero's) house (Phil. iv. 22); they who kept God's name were they who lived where Satan's throne was (Rev. ii. 13). Zeal for God grows the hotter by opposition; and thereby the godly most labour to give the glory of God reparation.—*William Jenkyn* (1612—1685), *in* "*The Morning Exercises.*"

*Verse* 127.—"*Therefore I love thy commandments above gold,*" etc. Partly, because it is one evidence of their excellency, that they are disliked by the vilest of men. Partly, out of a just indignation and opposition against my sworn enemies; and partly, because the great and general apostacy of others makes this duty more necessary to prevent their own and other men's relapses.—*Matthew Pool.*

*Verse* 127.—"*I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.*" The image employed brings before us the picture of the miser; his heart and his treasure are in his gold. With what delight he counts it! with what watchfulness he keeps it! hiding it in safe custody, lest he should be despoiled of that which is dearer to him than life. Such should Christians be, spiritual misers, counting their treasure which is "*above fine gold*"; and "hiding it in their hearts," in safe keeping, where the great despoiler shall not be able to reach it. Oh, Christians! how much more is your portion to you than the miser's treasure! Hide it; watch it; retain it. You need not be afraid of covetousness in spiritual things: rather "covet earnestly" to increase your store; and by living upon it and living in it, it will grow richer in extent, and more precious in value.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 127.—"*I love thy commandments.*" He professeth not that he fulfilled them, but that he *loved* them; and truly it is a great progress in godliness, if we be come thus far, as from our heart to love them. The natural man hates the commandments of God; they are so contrary to his corruption; but the regenerate man, as he hates his own corruption, so he loves the word, because according to it he desires to be reformed. And here is our comfort, that, albeit we cannot do what is commanded, yet if we love to do it, it is an argument of grace received. "*Above gold*" etc. It is lawful to love those creatures which God hath appointed for our use; with these conditions: the one is, that the first seat in our affection of love be reserved to God; and any other thing we love, that we love it in him and for him, and give it only the second room. Thus David, being a natural man, loved his natural food; but he protesteth he loved the law of the Lord more than his appointed food; and here he loves the commandments of God above all gold.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 128.—"*I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right.*" It is no compromising testimony to the integrity and value of the Lord's precepts with which the Psalmist concludes, "*I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right*"—every command, however hard; every injunction, however distasteful; every precept, however severe; even cut off thy right hand, pluck out thy right eye; forget thine own people and thy father's house; take up thy cross daily; sell all that thou hast—yea,

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Lord, even so, "*all* thy precepts concerning ALL things are right." What a blessed truth to arrive at, and find comfort in!—*Barton Bouchier.*

*Verse* 128.—"*I esteem all thy precepts,*" etc. We must not only respect all God's commandments, but also respect them all alike, and give them all the like respect. Obedience must be universal.—*R. Mayhew, in "The death of Death in the Death of Christ,"* 1679.

*Verse* 128.—"*All.*" The many *alls* in this verse used (not unlike that in Ezekiel xliv. 30) showeth the integrity and universality of his obedience. "*All*" is but a little word, but of large extent.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 128.—"*All thy precepts concerning all things to be right.*" He had a high estimate of God's precepts; he thought them just in all things; just, because they prescribe nothing but that which is exactly just; and just, because they bring a just punishment on the transgressors, and a reward to the righteous.—*William Nicholson.*

*Verse* 128.—The upright man squares all his actions by a right rule: carnal reason cannot bias him, corrupt practice cannot sway him, but God's sacred word directs him. Hence it is that his respect is universal to all divine precepts, avoiding all evil, performing all good without exception. Thus David's upright man here *esteems God's precepts concerning all things to be right*, and therefore is careful to observe them. Hence it is, that he is the same man at all times, in all places; because at all times, and in all societies, he acts by one and the same rule. 'Tis a good saying of S. Cyprian, *ea non est religio, sed dissimulatio, quæ per omnia non constat sibi*, that is not piety, but hypocrisy, that is not in all things like itself, since the upright man measures every action by the straight line of divine prescript.—*Abraham Wright.*

*Verse* 128.—"*I hate every false way.*" The best trial of our love to God and his word is the contrary—hatred of sin and impiety: "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." He that loves a tree, hates the worm that consumes it; he that loves a garment, hates the moth that eats it; he that loveth life, abhorreth death; and he that loves the Lord hates every thing that offends him. Let men take heed to this, who are in love of their sins: how can the love of God be in them?

Religion binds us not only to hate one way of falsehood, but all the ways of it. As there is nothing good, but in some measure a godly man loves it; so is there nothing evil, but in some measure he hates it. And this is the perfection of the children of God; a perfection not of degrees; for we neither love good, nor hate evil as we should; but a perfection of parts; because we love every good, and we hate every evil in some measure.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 128.—"*And I hate.*" The Being who loves the good with infinite intensity must hate evil with the same intensity. So far from any incompatibility between this love and this hatred, they are the counterparts of each other,—opposite poles of the same moral emotion.—*John W. Haley, in "An Examination of the alleged Discrepancies of the Bible,"* 1875.

*Verse* 128.—"*I hate every false way.*" If Satan get a grip of thee by any one sin, is it not enough to carry thee to damnation? As the butcher carries the beast to the slaughter, sometime bound by all the four feet, and sometime by one only; so it is with Satan. Though thou be not a slave to all sin; if thou be a slave to one, the grip he hath of thee, by that one sinful affection, is sufficient to captive thee.—*William Cowper.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 129 TO 136.

THY testimonies *are* wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.

130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

131 I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

132 Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

133 Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

134 Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.

135 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

136 Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

129. "*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*" Full of wonderful revelations, commands, and promises. Wonderful in their nature, as being free from all error, and bearing within themselves overwhelming self-evidence of their truth; wonderful in their effects as instructing, elevating, strengthening, and comforting the soul. Jesus the eternal Word is called Wonderful, and all the uttered words of God are wonderful in their degree. Those who know them best wonder at them most. It is wonderful that God should have borne testimony at all to sinful men, and more wonderful still that his testimony should be of such a character, so clear, so full, so gracious, so mighty. "*Therefore doth my soul keep them.*" Their wonderful character so impressed itself upon his mind that he kept them in his memory: their wonderful excellence so charmed his heart that he kept them in his life. Some men wonder at the words of God, and use them for their speculation; but David was always practical, and the more he wondered the more he obeyed. Note that his religion was soul work; not with head and hand alone did he keep the testimonies; but his soul, his truest and most real self, held fast to them.

130. "*The entrance of thy words giveth light.*" No sooner do they gain admission into the soul than they enlighten it: what light may be expected from their prolonged indwelling! Their very entrance floods the mind with instruction, for they are so full, so clear; but, on the other hand, there must be such an "entrance," or there will be no illumination. The mere hearing of the word with the external ear is of small value by itself, but when the words of God enter into the chambers of the heart then light is scattered on all sides. The word finds no entrance into some minds because they are blocked up with self-conceit, or prejudice, or indifference; but where due attention is given, divine illumination must surely follow upon a knowledge of the mind of God. Oh, that thy words, like the beams of the sun, may enter through the window of my understanding, and dispel the darkness of my mind! "*It giveth understanding unto the simple.*" The sincere and candid are the true disciples of the word. To such it gives not only knowledge, but understanding. These simple-hearted ones are frequently despised, and their simplicity has another meaning infused into it, so as to be made the theme of ridicule; but what matters it? Those whom the world dubs as fools are among the truly wise if they are taught of God. What a divine power rests in the word of God, since it not only bestows light, but gives that very mental eye by which the light is received—"It giveth understanding." Hence the value of the words of God to the simple,

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who cannot receive mysterious truth unless their minds are aided to see it and prepared to grasp it.

131. "*I opened my mouth, and panted.*" So animated was his desire that he looked into the animal world to find a picture of it. He was filled with an intense longing, and was not ashamed to describe it by a most expressive, natural, and yet singular symbol. Like a stag that has been hunted in the chase, and is hard pressed, and therefore pants for breath, so did the Psalmist pant for the entrance of God's word into his soul. Nothing else could content him. All that the world could yield him left him still panting with open mouth. "*For I longed for thy commandments.*" Longed to know them, longed to obey them, longed to be conformed to their spirit, longed to teach them to others. He was a servant of God, and his industrious mind longed to receive orders; he was a learner in the school of grace, and his eager spirit longed to be taught of the Lord.

132. "*Look thou upon me.*" A godly man cannot long be without prayer. During the previous verses he had been expressing his love to God's word, but here he is upon his knees again. This prayer is specially short, but exceedingly sententious, "Look thou upon me." While he stood with open mouth panting for the commandments, he besought the Lord to look upon him, and let his condition and his unexpressed longings plead for him. He desires to be known of God, and daily observed by him. He wishes also to be favoured with the divine smile which is included in the word—"look." If a look from us to God has saving efficacy in it, what may we not expect from a look from God to us. "*And be merciful unto me.*" Christ's look at Peter was a look of mercy, and all the looks of the heavenly Father are of the same kind. If he looked in stern justice his eyes would not endure us, but looking in mercy he spares and blesses us. If God looks and sees us panting, he will not fail to be merciful to us. "*As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.*" Look on me as thou lookest on those who love thee; be merciful to me as thou art accustomed to be towards those who truly serve thee. There is a use and wont which God observes towards them that love him, and David craved that he might experience it. He would not have the Lord deal either better or worse with him than he was accustomed to deal with his saints—worse would not save him, better could not be. In effect he prays, "I am thy servant; treat me as thou treatest thy servants. I am thy child; deal with me as with a son." Especially is it clear from the context that he desired such an entering in of the word, and such a clear understanding of it as God usually gives to his own, according to the promise, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord."

Reader, do you love the name of the Lord? Is his character most honourable in your sight? most dear to your heart? This is a sure mark of grace, for no soul ever loved the Lord except as the result of love received from the Lord himself.

133. "*Order my steps in thy word.*" This is one of the Lord's customary mercies to his chosen,—"He keepeth the feet of his saints." By his grace he enables us to put our feet step by step in the very place which his word ordains. This prayer seeks a very choice favour, namely, that every distinct act, every step, might be arranged and governed by the will of God. This does not stop short of perfect holiness, neither will the believer's desires be satisfied with anything beneath that blessed consummation. "*And let not any iniquity have dominion over me.*" This is the negative side of the blessing. We ask to do all that is right, and to fall under the power of nothing that is wrong. God is our sovereign, and we would have every thought in subjection to his sway. Believers have no choice, darling sins to which they would be willing to bow. They pant for perfect liberty from the power of evil, and being conscious that they cannot obtain it of themselves, they cry unto God for it.

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134. "*Deliver me from the oppression of man.*" David had tasted all the bitterness of this great evil. It had made him an exile from his country, and banished him from the sanctuary of the Lord: therefore he pleads to be saved from it. It is said that oppression makes a wise man mad, and no doubt it has made many a righteous man sinful. Oppression is in itself wicked, and it drives men to wickedness. We little know how much of our virtue is due to our liberty; if we had been in bonds under haughty tyrants we might have yielded to them, and instead of being confessors we might now have been apostates. He who taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," will sanction this prayer, which is of much the same tenor, since to be oppressed is to be tempted. "*So will I keep thy statutes.*" When the stress of oppression was taken off he would go his own way, and that way would be the way of the Lord. Although we ought not to yield to the threatenings of men, yet many do so; the wife is sometimes compelled by the oppression of her husband to act against her conscience: children and servants, and even whole nations have been brought into the same difficulty. Their sins will be largely laid at the oppressor's door, and it usually pleases God ere long to overthrow those powers and dominions which compel men to do evil. The worst of it is that some persons, when the pressure is taken off from them, follow after unrighteousness of their own accord. These give evidence of being sinners in grain. As for the righteous, it happens to them as it did to the apostles of old, "Being let go, they went to their own company." When saints are freed from the tyrant they joyfully pay homage to their king.

135. "*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.*" Oppressors frown, but do thou smile. They darken my life, but do thou shine upon me, and all will be bright. The Psalmist again declares that he is God's servant, and he seeks for no favour from others, but only from his own Lord and Master. "*And teach me thy statutes.*" This is the favour which he considers to be the shining of the face of God upon him. If the Lord will be exceeding gracious, and make him his favourite, he will ask no higher blessing than still to be taught the royal statutes. See how he craves after holiness; this is the choicest of all gems in his esteem. As we say among men that a good education is a great fortune, so to be taught of the Lord is a gift of special grace. The most favoured believer needs teaching; even when he walks in the light of God's countenance he has still to be taught the divine statutes or he will transgress.

136. "*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.*" He wept in sympathy with God to see the holy law despised and broken. He wept in pity for men who were thus drawing down upon themselves the fiery wrath of God. His grief was such that he could scarcely give it vent; his tears were not mere drops of sorrow, but torrents of woe. In this he became like the Lord Jesus, who beheld the city, and wept over it; and like unto Jehovah himself, who hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but that he turn unto him and live. The experience of this verse indicates a great advance upon anything we have had before: the psalm and the Psalmist are both growing. That man is a ripe believer who sorrows because of the sins of others. In verse 120 his flesh trembled at the presence of God, and here it seems to melt and flow away in floods of tears. None are so affected by heavenly things as those who are much in the study of the word, and are thereby taught the truth and essence of things. Carnal men are afraid of brute force, and weep over losses and crosses; but spiritual men feel a holy fear of the Lord himself, and most of all lament when they see dishonour cast upon his holy name.

"Lord, let me weep for nought but sin,
And after none but thee,
And then I would, O that I might!
A constant weeper be."

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## NOTES ON VERSES 129 TO 136.

All the verses of this section begin with the seventeenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet; but each verse with a different word.—*William S. Plumer.*

This seventeenth letter is the letter P. The section is precious, practical, profitable, powerful: peculiarly so.—*C. H. S.*

*Verse* 129.—"*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*" The Scriptures are "*wonderful*," with respect to the matter which they contain, the manner in which they are written, and the effects which they produce. They contain the sublimest spiritual truths, veiled under external ceremonies and sacraments, figurative descriptions, typical histories, parables, similitudes, &c. When properly opened and enforced, they terrify and humble, they convert and transform, they console and strengthen. Who but must delight to study and to "observe" these "testimonies" of the will and the wisdom, the love and the power of God Most High! While we have these holy writings, let us not waste our time, mis-employ our thoughts, and prostitute our admiration, by doating on human follies, and wondering at human trifles. —*George Horne.*

*Verse* 129.—"*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*" God's testimonies are "wonderful" (1) in their *majesty* and *composure*, which striketh reverence into the hearts of those that consider; the Scripture speaketh to us at a God-like rate. (2) It is "wonderful" for the *matter* and *depth of mystery*, which cannot be found elsewhere, concerning God, and Christ, the creation of the world, the souls of men, and their immortal and everlasting condition, the fall of man, etc. (3) It is "wonderful" for *purity* and *perfection*. The Decalogue in ten words compriseth the whole duty of man, and reacheth to the very soul, and all the motions of the heart. (4) It is "wonderful" for the *harmony* and *consent* of all the parts. All religion is of a piece, and one part doth not interfere with another, but conspireth to promote the great end, of subjection of the creature to God. (5) It is "wonderful" for the *power* of it. There is a mighty power which goeth along with the word of God, and astonisheth the hearts of those that consider it and feel it. 1 Thess. i. 5.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 129.—"*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*" The Bible itself is an astonishing and standing miracle. Written fragment by fragment, through the course of fifteen centuries, under different states of society, and in different languages, by persons of the most opposite tempers, talents, and conditions, learned and unlearned, prince and peasant, bond and free; cast into every form of instructive composition and good writing; history, prophecy, poetry, allegory, emblematic representation, judicious interpretation, literal statement, precept, example, proverbs, disquisition, epistle, sermon, prayer—in short, all rational shapes of human discourse, and treating, moreover, on subjects not obvious, but most difficult; its authors are not found like other men, contradicting one another upon the most ordinary matters of fact and opinion, but are at harmony upon the whole of their sublime and momentous scheme.—*J. M'Lagan*, 1788—1852.

*Verse* 129.—Highly prize the Scriptures, or you will not obey them. David said, "*therefore doth my soul keep them*"; and why was this, but that he counted them to be wonderful? Can *he* make a proficiency in any art, who doth slight and deprecate it? Prize this book of God above all other books. St. Gregory calls the Bible "the heart and soul of God." The rabbins say, that there is a mountain of sense hangs upon every *apex* and tittle of Scripture. "The law of the Lord is perfect" (Ps. xix. 7). The Scripture is the library of the Holy Ghost; it is a pandect of divine knowledge, an exact model and platform of religion. The Scripture contains in it the *credenda*, "the things which we are to believe," and the *agenda*, "the things which we are to practise." It is "able to make us wise unto

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salvation" : 2 Tim. iii. 15. "The Scripture is the standard of truth," the judge of controversies ; it is the pole-star to direct us to heaven (Isai. viii. 20). "The commandment is a lamp" : Prov. vi. 23. The Scripture is the compass by which the rudder of our will is to be steered ; it is the field in which Christ, the Pearl of price, is hid ; it is a rock of diamonds, it is a sacred *collyrium*, or "*eye-salve;*" it mends *their* eyes *that* look upon it ; it is a spiritual optic-glass in which the glory of God is resplendent ; it is the panacea or "universal medicine" for the soul. The leaves of Scripture are like the leaves of the tree of life, "for the healing of the nations" : Rev. xxii. 2. The Scripture is both the breeder and feeder of grace. How is the convert born, but by "the word of truth"? James i. 18. How doth he grow, but by "the sincere milk of the word"? 1 Pet. ii. 2. The word written is the book out of which our evidences for heaven are fetched ; it is the sea-mark which shows us the rocks of sin to avoid ; it is the antidote against error and apostacy, the two-edged sword which wounds the old serpent. It is our bulwark to withstand the force of lust ; like the Capitol of Rome, which was a place of strength and ammunition. The Scripture is the "tower of David," whereon the shields of our faith hang : Canticles iv. 4. "Take away the word, and you deprive us of the sun," said Luther. The word written is above an angelic embassy, or voice from heaven. "This voice which came from heaven we heard. We have also," *βεβαιότερον λογον*, "a more sure word" : 2 Pet. i. 18, 19. O prize the word written ; prizing is the way to profiting. If Cæsar so valued his Commentaries, that for preserving them he lost his purple robe, how should we estimate the sacred oracles of God? "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" : Job xxiii. 12. King Edward the Sixth, on the day of his coronation, had presented before him three swords, signifying that he was monarch of three kingdoms. The king said, there was one sword wanting ; being asked what that was, he answered, "The Holy Bible, which is the sword of the Spirit, and is to be preferred before these ensigns of royalty." Robert King of Sicily did so prize God's word, that, speaking to his friend Petrarcha, he said, "I protest, the Scriptures are dearer to me than my kingdom ; and if I must be deprived of one of them, I had rather lose my diadem than the Scriptures."—*Thomas Watson, in "The Morning Exercises."*

*Verse* 129.—The word contains matter to exercise the greatest minds. Many men cannot endure to spend their thoughts and time about trivial matters ; whereas others think it happiness enough if they can, by the meanest employments, procure subsistence. Oh, let all those of high aspirations exercise themselves in the law of God ; here are objects fit for great minds, yea, objects that will elevate the greatest : and indeed none in the world are truly great but the saints, for they exercise themselves in the great counsels of God. We account those men the greatest that are employed in state affairs : now the saints are lifted up above all things in the world, and regard them all as little and mean, and are exercised in the great affairs of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Hence the Lord would have the kings and the judges to have the book of the law written, Deut. xvii. 18, 19 ; and it is reported of Alphonsus, king of Arragon, that in the midst of all his great and manifold occupations, he read over the Scriptures fourteen times with commentaries. How many have we, men of great estates, and claiming to be of great minds, that scarce regard the law of God : they look upon his law as beneath them. Books of history and war they will peruse with diligence ; but for the Scripture, it is a thing that has little in it. It is a special means to obedience to have high thoughts of God's law. That is the reason why the prophet speaks thus, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing :" Hos. viii. 12. As if he should say, if they had had the things of my law in their thoughts, they would never so have acted. Ps. cxix. 129, "*Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my soul keep them.*" He saith not,

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therefore do I keep them; but, therefore doth *my soul* keep them; my very soul is in this, in keeping thy testimonies, for I look upon them as wonderful things. It is a good sign that the spirit of the great God is in a man, when it raises him above other things, to look upon the things of his word as the only great things in the world. "All flesh is grass, and all the godliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever:" Isa. xl. 6, 8. There is a vanity in all things of the world; but in that which the word reveals, in that there is an eternity: we should therefore admire at nothing so as at the word, and we should greatly delight in God's commandments; an ordinary degree of admiration or delight is not sufficient, but great admiration and great delight there should be in the law of God. And all arguments drawn from God's law should powerfully prevail with you.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

*Verse* 129.—"*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*" Wonders will never cease. Air, earth, water, the world above, the world beneath, time, eternity, worms, birds, fishes, beasts, men, angels are all full of wonders. The more all things are studied, the more do wonders appear. It is idle, therefore, to find fault with the mysteries of Scripture, or to deny them. Inspiration glories in them. He who rejects the mysteries of love, grace, truth, power, justice and faithfulness of God's word, rejects salvation. It has marvels in itself, and marvels in its operation. They are good cause of love, not of offence; of *keeping*, not of breaking God's precepts.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 129.—"*My soul,*" not merely I, but I with all my heart and soul.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verse* 129.—I have completed reading the whole Bible through since January last. I began it on the first day of the present year, and finished it on the 26th of October. I have read it in that space four times, and not without real profit to myself. I always find in it something new; it being, like its Author, infinite and inexhaustible.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce*, 1814.

*Verse* 129.—What do I not owe to the Lord for permitting me to take a part in the translation of his word? Never did I see such wonders, and wisdom, and love, in the blessed book, as since I have been obliged to study every expression; and it is a delightful reflection, that death cannot deprive us of the pleasure of studying its mysteries.—*Henry Martyn.*

*Verse* 130.—"*The opening of thy words enlightens, making the simple understand.*" The common version of the first word (*entrance*) is inaccurate, and the one here given, though exact, is ambiguous. The clause does not refer to the mechanical opening of the book by the reader, but to the spiritual opening of its true sense by divine illumination, to the mind which naturally cannot discern it.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verse* 130.—"*Entrance,*" lit. *opening*, *i.e.* unfolding or unveiling.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

*Verse* 130.—"*The entrance of thy words giveth light.*" The first entrance, or vestibule: for the Psalmist wishes to point out that only the beginnings are apprehended in this life; and that these beginnings are to be preferred to all human wisdom.—*Henricus Mollerus.*

*Verse* 130.—"*The entrance of thy words giveth light,*" etc. The beginning of them; the first three chapters in Genesis, what light do they give into the origin of all things; the creation of man, his state of innocence; his fall through the temptations of Satan, and his recovery and salvation by Christ, the seed of the woman! The first principles of the oracles of God, the rudiments of religion, the elements of the world, the rites of the ceremonial law gave great light unto Gospel mysteries.—*John Gill.*

*Verse* 130.—"*The entrance of thy words giveth light.*" A profane shopman crams into his pocket a leaf of a Bible, and reads the last words of Daniel: "Go thou thy way, till the end be, for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the

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end of the days," and begins to think what his own lot will be when days are ended. A Göttingen Professor opens a big printed Bible to see if he has eyesight enough to read it, and alights on the passage, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not," and in reading it the eyes of his understanding are enlightened. Cromwell's soldier opens his Bible to see how far the musket-ball has pierced, and finds it stopped at the verse: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart and the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." And in a frolic the Kentish soldier opens the Bible which his broken-hearted mother had sent him, and the first sentence that turns up is the text so familiar in boyish days: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," and the weary profligate repairs for rest to Jesus Christ.—*James Hamilton*, 1814—1867.

*Verse* 130.—He amplifies this praise of the word of God when he saith that the entrance thereof, the first opening of the door of the word, gives light: for if the first entrance to it give light, what will the progress and continuance thereof do? This accuseth the age wherein we live, who now of a long time hath been taught by the word of God so clearly, that in regard of time they might have been teachers of others, yet are they but children in knowledge and understanding. But to whom doth the word give understanding? David saith to the "*simple*": not to such as are high-minded, or double in heart, or wise in their own eyes, who will examine the mysteries of godliness by the quickness of natural reason. No: to such as deny themselves, as captive their natural understanding, and like humble disciples submit themselves, not to ask, but to hear; not to reason, but to believe. And if for this cause, naturalists who want this humility cannot profit by the word; what marvel that Papists far less become wise by it, who have their hearts so full of prejudices concerning it, that they spare not to utter blasphemies against it, calling it not unprofitable, but pernicious to the simple and to the idiots.

And again, where they charge it with difficulty, that simple men and idiots should not be suffered to read it, because it is obscure; all these frivolous allegations of men are annulled by this one testimony of God, that *it gives light to the simple.—William Cowper.*

*Verse* 130.—"*Light.*" This "*light*" hath excellent properties. 1. It is *lux manifestans*, it manifesteth itself and all things else. How do I see the sun, but by the sun, by its own light? How do I know the Scripture to be the word of God, but by the light that shineth in it, commending itself to my conscience! So it manifests all things else; it layeth open all frauds and impostures of Satan, the vanity of worldly things, the deceits of the heart, the odiousness of sin. 2. It is *lux dirigens*, a directing light, that we may see our way and work. As the sun lighteth man to his labour, so doth this direct us in all our conditions: verse 105. It directs us how to manage ourselves in all conditions. 3. It is *lux vivificans*, a quickening light. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life": John viii. 12. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light": Eph. v. 14. That light was the life of men: so is this spiritual life; it not only discovereth the object, but helpeth the faculty, filleth the soul with life and strength. 4. It is *lux exhilarans*, a comforting, refreshing, cheering light; and that in two respects. (1) Because it presents us with excellent grounds of comfort. (2) Because it is a soul-satisfying light.—*Condensed from Manton.*

*Verse* 130.—"*It giveth understanding.*" If all the books in the world were assembled together, the Bible would as much take the lead in disciplining the understanding as in directing the soul. It will not make astronomers, chemists, or linguists; but there is a great difference between strengthening the mind and storing it with information.—*Henry Melvill.*



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*Verse* 130.—"*It giveth understanding to the simple.*" There are none so knowing that God cannot blind; none so blind and ignorant whose mind and heart his Spirit cannot open. He who, by his incubation upon the waters at the creation, hatched that rude mass into the beautiful form we now see, and out of that dark chaos made the glorious heavens, and garnished them with so many orient stars, can move upon thy dark soul and enlighten it, though it be as void of knowledge as the evening of the world's first day was of light. The schoolmaster sometimes sends home the child, and bids his father to put him to another trade, because not able, with all his art, to make a scholar of him; but if the Spirit of God be master, thou shalt learn, though a dunce: "*The entrance of thy word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple.*" No sooner is the soul entered into the Spirit's school, than he becomes a proficient.—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse* 130.—"*To the simple.*" He does not say, "*giveth understanding*" to the wise and prudent, to learned men, and to those skilled in letters; but to the "*simple.*"—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse* 130.—"*To the simple.*" This is one great characteristic of the word of God,—however incomprehensible to the carnal mind, it is adapted to every grade of enlightened intelligence.—*W. Wilson.*

*Verse* 130.—"*The simple.*" The word is used sometimes in a good sense, and sometimes in a bad sense. It is used in a good sense, First, for the sincere and plain-hearted: "The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me": Ps. cxvi. 6. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward": 2 Cor. i. 12. Secondly, for those that do not oppose the presumption of carnal wisdom to the pure light of the word: so we must all be simple, or fools, that we may be wise: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" (1 Cor. iii. 18); that is, in simplicity of heart submitting to God's conduct, and believing what he hath revealed.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 131.—"*I opened my mouth, and panted.*" By this manner of speech, David expresses, as Basil thinks, *animi propensionem*, that the inclination of his soul was after God's word. For, this opened mouth, Ambrose thinks, is *os interioris hominis*, the mouth of the inward man, which in effect is his heart; and the speech notes *vehementem animi intensionem*, a vehement intension of his spirit, saith Euthymius. Yet shall it not be amiss to consider here how the mind of the godly earnestly affected moves the body also. The speech may be drawn from travellers, who being very desirous to attain to their proposed ends, enforce their strength thereunto; and finding a weakness in their body to answer their will, they pant and open their mouth, seeking refreshment from the air to renew their strength: or as Vatablus thinks, from men exceeding hungry and thirsty, who open their mouth as if they would draw in the whole air, and then pant and sigh within themselves when they find no full refreshment by it. So he expresseth it: "My heart burns with so ardent a longing for thy commandments, that I am forced ever and anon to gasp by reason of my painful breathing."

However it be, it lets us see how the hearing, reading, or meditating of God's word wakened in David a most earnest affection to have the light, joy, grace, and comfort thereof communicated to his own heart. For in the godly, knowledge of good increaseth desires; and it cannot be expressed how vehemently their souls long to feel that power and comfort which they know is in the word; and how sore they are grieved and troubled when they find it not.

And happy were we, if we could meet the Lord with this like affection; that when he opens his mouth, we could also open our heart to hear, as David here doth. *Christus aperit os, ut daret aliis spiritum; David aperuit*

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*ut acciperet;* offering his heart to receive the spirit of grace, when God openeth his mouth in his word to give it. For it is his promise to us all—"Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Let us turn it into a prayer, that the Lord, who opened the heart of Lydia, would open our heart to receive grace when he offers by his word to give it.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 131.—"*I opened my mouth, and panted,*" etc. There are two ways in which these words may be understood. They may be considered as expressing the very earnest longing of the Psalmist for greater acquaintance with God in spiritual things; and then, in saying, "*I opened my mouth, and panted,*" he merely asserts the vehemence of his desire. Or you may separate the clauses: you may regard the first as the utterance of a man utterly dissatisfied with the earth and earthly things, and the second as the expression of a consciousness that God, and God only, could meet the longings of his soul. "*I opened my mouth, and panted.*" Out of breath, with chasing shadows, and hunting after baubles, I sit down exhausted, as far off as ever from the happiness which has been earnestly but fruitlessly sought. Whither, then, shall I turn? Thy commandments, O Lord, and these alone, can satisfy the desires of an immortal being like myself; and on these, therefore, henceforward shall my longings be turned.—*Henry Melvill.*

*Verse* 131.—"*I opened my mouth, and panted.*" A metaphor taken from men scorched and sweltered with heat, or from those that have run themselves out of breath in following the thing which they would overtake. The former metaphor expressed the vehemency of his love; the other the earnestness of his pursuit: he was like a man gasping for breath, and sucking in the cool air.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 131.—"*I longed for thy commandments.*" This is a desire which God will satisfy. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it": Ps. lxxxi. 10.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 132.—"*Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me,*" etc. "*Look upon me*" stripped by thieves of my virtues, and then wounded with sins, and "*be merciful unto me,*" showing compassion on me, taking care of me in the inn of the Church universal, that I fall not again among thieves, nor be harmed by the wolves which howl about this fold, but dare not enter in. "*Look upon me,*" no longer worthy to be called thy son, and "*be merciful unto me,*" not as the jealous elder brother would treat me, but let me join the glad song and banquet of them that love thy name. Look upon me the publican, standing afar off in thy temple the Church, and be merciful unto me, not after the Pharisee's judgment, but "*as thou usest to do unto them that love thy name,*" which is the gracious God. Look on me as on weeping Peter, and be merciful unto me as thou wast to him, who so loved thy name as by his triple confession of love to wash out his threefold denial, saying, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." "*Look upon me,*" as on the sinful woman, penitent and weeping, and be merciful unto me, not according to the judgment of the Pharisee who murmured at her, as Judas who was indignant at her, but forgiving me as thou didst her, "because she loved much," telling me also, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace."—*Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 132.—"*Look thou upon me.*" Lord! since our looks to thee are often so slight, so cold, so distant, that no impression is made upon our hearts, do thou condescend continually to look upon us with mercy and with power. Vouchsafe us such a look, as may bring us to ourselves, and touch us with tenderness and contrition in the remembrance of that sin, unbelief, and disobedience, which pierced the hands, the feet, the heart of our dearest Lord and Saviour. Comp. Luke xxii. 61.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 132.—"*As thou usest to do,*" etc. David would not lose any privilege that God hath by promise settled on his children. Do with me, saith he, "*as thou usest to do.*" This is no more than family fare, what

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thou promisest to do for all that love thee; and let me not go worse clad than the rest of my brethren.—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse* 132.—"*As thou usest to do unto those,*" etc. We should be content if God deals with us as he has always dealt with his people. While he could not be satisfied with anything less than their portion, David asks for nothing better; he implores no singular dispensation in his favour, no deviation from the accustomed methods of his grace . . . . It is always a good proof that your convictions and desires are from the operation of the Spirit when you are willing to conform to God's order. What is this order? It is to dispense his blessings connectedly. It is never to justify without sanctifying; never to give a title to heaven without a meetness for it. Now the man that is divinely wrought upon will not expect nor desire the one without the other. Therefore he will not expect the blessing of God without obedience; because it is always God's way to connect the comforts of the Holy Ghost with the fear of the Lord; and if his children transgress his laws, to visit their transgressions with a rod. Therefore he will neither expect nor desire his blessing without exertion; for it has always been God's way to crown only those that run the race that is set before them, and fight the good fight of faith. Therefore he will not expect nor desire the Divine blessing without prayer; for it has always been God's way to make his people sensible of their wants, and to give an answer to prayer. Therefore he will not expect nor desire to reach heaven without difficulties; for his people have always had to deny themselves, and take up their cross. If they have not been chosen in the furnace of affliction, they have been purified. God had one Son without sin, but he never had one without sorrow: "he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." "Yes," says the suppliant before us, "secure me their everlasting portion, and I am willing to drink of the cup they drank of, and to be baptized with the baptism they were baptized with. I want no new, no by-path to glory. I am content to keep the King's high road. '*Be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.*' I ask no more."—*William Jay*, 1769—1853.

*Verse* 133.—"*Order my steps in thy word.*" As before he sought mercy, so now he seeks grace. There are many that seek mercy to forgive sin, who seek not grace to deliver them from the power of sin: this is to abuse God's mercy, and turn his grace into wantonness. He that prayeth for mercy to forgive the guilt of sin only, seeks not that by sin he should not offend God; but that he may sin and not hurt himself: but he who craves deliverance also from the commanding power and deceit of sin, seeks not only a benefit to himself, but grace also to please and serve the Lord his God. The first is but a lover of himself; the second is a lover of God, more than of himself. And truly he never knew what it was to seek mercy for sin past, who with it also earnestly sought not grace to keep him from sin in time to come. These benefits cannot be divided: he who hath not the second (howsoever he flatter himself) may be assured that he hath not gotten the first.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 133.—"*Order my steps in thy word.*" It is written of Boleslaus, one of the kings of Poland, that he still carries about him the picture of his father, and when he was to do any great work or set upon any design extraordinary, he would look on the picture and pray that he might do nothing unworthy of such a father's name. Thus it is that the Scriptures are the picture of God's will, therein drawn out to the very life. Before a man enter upon or engage himself in any business whatsoever, let him look there, and read there what is to be done; what to be undone; and what God commands, let that be done; what he forbids, let that be undone; let the balance of the sanctuary weigh all, the oracles of God decide all, the rule of God's word be the square of all, and his glory the ultimate of all intendments whatsoever.—*From Spencer's "Things New and Old."*

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*Verse* 133.—"*Order my steps.*" הכן *hachen*, make them *firm;* let me not walk with a halting or unsteady step.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 133.—"*Order my steps,*" etc. The people of God would not only have their path right, but their *steps ordered;* as not their general course wrong (as those who walk in the way of everlasting perdition), so not a step awry; they would not miss the way to heaven, either in whole or in part.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 133.—"*My steps.*" Speaking of the steps of the Temple, Bunyan says, "These steps, whether cedar, gold, or stone, yet that which added to their adornment, was the wonderment of a Queen. And whatever they were made of, to be sure, they were a shadow of those steps, which we should take to, and in the house of God. 'Steps of God,' Ps. lxxxv. 13. 'Steps ordered by him,' Ps. xxxvii. 23. 'Steps ordered in his word,' Ps. cxix. 133. 'Steps of faith,' Rom. iv. 12. 'Steps of the spirit,' 2 Cor. xii. 18. 'Steps of truth,' 3 John, 4. 'Steps washed with butter,' Job xxix. 6. 'Steps taken before, or in the presence of God.' Steps butted and bounded by a divine rule. These are steps indeed."—*John Bunyan, in "Solomon's Temple Spiritualized."*

*Verse* 133.—"*Let not any iniquity,*" etc. True obedience to God is inconsistent with the dominion of any one lust, or corrupt affection. I say, though a man out of some slender and insufficient touch of religion upon his heart, may go right for a while, and do many things gladly; yet that corruption which is indulged, and under the power of which a man lieth, will at length draw him off from God; and therefore no one sin shall have dominion over us. When doth sin reign, or have dominion over us? When we do not endeavour to mortify it, and to cut off the provisions that may feed that lust. Chrysostom's observation is, the apostle does not say, let it not tyrannize over you, but, let it not reign over you; that is, when you suffer it to have a quiet reign in your hearts.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 133.—"*Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.*" I had rather be a prisoner to man all my life than be a bondage to sin one day. He says not, Let not this and the other man rule over me; but "let not *sin* have dominion over me." Well said! There is hope in such a man's condition as long as it is so.—*Michael Bruce,* 1666.

*Verse* 134.—"*Deliver me from the oppression of man.*" 1. "*Man*" by way of *distinction.* There is the oppression and tyranny of the Devil and sin; but the Psalmist doth not mean that now: *Hominum non dæmonum,* saith Hugo. 2. "*Man*" by way of *aggravation. Homo homini lupus:* no creatures so ravenous and destructive to one another as man. It is a shame that one man should oppress another. Beasts do not usually devour those of the same kind; but, usually, a man's enemies are those of his own household: Matt. x. 36. The nearer we are in bonds of alliance, the greater the hatred. 3. "*Man*" by way of *diminution.* And to lessen the fear of this evil, this term Adam is given them, to show their weakness in comparison of God. Thou art God; but they that are so ready and forward to oppress and injure us are but men; thou canst easily overrule their power and break the yoke. I think this consideration chiefest, because of other places. "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?" Isai. li. 12, 13.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 134.—"*From the oppression of man.*" Some render it, "*from the oppression of Adam;*" as Jarchi observes; and Arama interprets it of the sin of Adam, and as a prayer to be delivered or redeemed from it; as the Lord's people are by the blood of Christ.—*John Gill.*

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*Verse* 135.—"*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.*" The face of God shines upon us, when, in his providence, we are guided and upheld; also when we are made to share in the good things of his providence, and when we are placed in a position wherein we can do much good. Much more does the face of God shine upon us, when we are favoured with tokens of his gracious favour; for then we grow under the consciousness of a loving God, with rich supplies of his grace and Spirit.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 135.—"*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.*" Oftentimes the wrongful dealings of men, of others, and of ourselves, like a cloud of smoke arising from the earth and obscuring the face of the sun, hide from us for a while the light of the countenance of God: but he soon clears it all away, and looks down upon us in loving mercy as before, lighting for us the path of obedience, and brightening our way unto himself.—"*Plain Commentary,*" 1859.

*Verse* 135.—"*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.*" The believer's incessant cry is, Let me see "the King's face." This is a blessing worth praying for. It is his heart's desire, his present privilege, and what is infinitely better, his sure, everlasting prospect—"*They shall see his face.*" Rev. xxii. 4.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 135.—"*Make thy face to shine . . . and teach me.*" Blessed is the man whom eternal Truth teacheth, not by obscure figures and transient sounds, but by direct and full communication. The perceptions of our senses are narrow and dull, and our reason on those perceptions frequently misleads us. He whom the eternal Word condescendeth to teach is disengaged at once from the labyrinth of human opinions. For "of one word are all things"; and all things without voice or language speak of him alone: he is that divine principle which speaketh in our hearts, and without which there can be neither just apprehension nor rectitude of judgment.

O God, who art the truth, make me one with thee in everlasting life! I am often weary of reading, and weary of hearing; in thee alone is the sum of my desire! Let all teachers be silent, let the whole creation be dumb before thee, and do thou only speak unto my soul!

Thy ministers can pronounce the words, but cannot impart the spirit: they may entertain the fancy with the charms of eloquence, but if thou are silent they do not inflame the heart. They administer the letter, but thou openest the sense; they utter the mystery, but thou revealest its meaning; they point out the way of life, but thou bestowest strength to walk in it; they water, but thou givest the increase. Therefore do thou, O Lord, my God, Eternal Truth! speak to my soul! lest, being outwardly warmed, but not inwardly quickened, I die, and be found unfruitful. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." "Thou only hast the words of eternal life."—*Thomas à Kempis,* 1380—1471.

*Verse* 135.—"*Make thy face to shine . . . . . teach me,*" etc. God hath many ways of teaching; he teaches by book, he teaches by his fingers, he teaches by his rod; but his most comfortable and effectual teaching is by the light of his eye: "*O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me: let them bring me unto thy holy hill:*" Ps. xlii. 3.—*Richard Alleine* (1611—1681), *in* "*Heaven Opened.*"

*Verse* 135.—"*Make thy face to shine . . . . teach me thy statutes.*" God's children, when they beg comfort, also beg grace to serve him acceptably. For by teaching God's statutes is not meant barely a giving us a speculative knowledge of God's will; for so David here; "*Make thy face to shine*"; and "*Teach me thy statutes.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 136.—"*Rivers of waters run down my eyes.*" Most of the easterns shed tears much more copiously than the people of Europe. The psalmist said *rivers of waters* ran down his eyes; and though the language is

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beautifully figurative, I have no doubt it was also literally true. I have myself seen Arabs shed tears like streams.—*John Gadsby.*

*Verse* 136.—"*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,*" etc. Either *because mine eyes keep not thy law*, so some. The eye is the inlet and outlet of a great deal of sin, and therefore it ought to be a weeping eye. Or rather, *they, i.e., those about me:* ver. 139. Note, the sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 136.—"*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,*" etc. David's afflictions drew not so many tears from him as the sins of others; not his banishment by his son, as the breach of God's law by the wicked. Nothing went so to his heart as the dishonour of God, whose glory shining in his word and ordinances, is dearer to the godly than their lives. Elijah desired to die when he saw God so dishonoured by Ahab and Jezebel. The eye is for two things, sight and tears: if we see God dishonoured, presently our eyes should be filled with tears.—*William Greenhill*, 1591—1677.

*Verse* 136.—"*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,*" etc. Godly men are affected with deep sorrow for the sins of the ungodly.

Let us consider the *nature* of this affection. 1. It is not a stoical apathy, and affected carelessness; much less a delightful partaking with sinful practices. 2. Not a proud setting off of their own goodness, with marking the sin of others as the Pharisee did in the gospel. 3. Not the derision and mocking of the folly of men, with that "laughing philosopher": it comes nearer to the temper of the *other* who *wept* always for it. 4. It is not a bitter, bilious anger, breaking forth into railings and reproaches, nor an upbraiding insultation. 5. Nor is it a vindictive desire of punishment, venting itself in curses and imprecations, which is the rash temper of many, but especially of the vulgar sort. The disciples' motion to Christ was far different from that way, and yet he says to them, "Ye know not of what spirit ye are." They thought they had been of Elijah's spirit, but he told them they were mistaken, and did not know of what a spirit they were in that motion. Thus heady zeal often mistakes and flatters itself. We find not here a desire of fire to come down from heaven upon the breakers of the law, but such a grief as would rather bring water to quench it, if it were falling on them. "*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes.*"—*Robert Leighton.*

*Verse* 136.—"*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,*" etc. The Lord requireth this [mourning bitterly for other men's sins] to keep our hearts the more tender and upright; it is an act God useth to make us more careful of our own souls, to be troubled at the sins of others, at sin in a third person. It keepeth us at a great distance from temptation. This is like quenching of fire in a neighbour's house: before it comes near thee, thou runnest with thy bucket. There is no way to keep us free from the infection, so much as mourning. The soul will never agree to do that which it grieved itself to see another do. And, as it keepeth us upright, so also humble, fearful of Divine judgment, tender lest we ourselves offend, and draw down the wrath of God. He that shruggeth when he seeth a snake creeping upon another, will much more be afraid when it cometh near to himself. In our own sins we have the advantage of conscience scourging the soul with remorse and shame; in bewailing the sins of others, we have only the reasons of duty and obedience. They that fight abroad out of love to valour and exploits, will certainly fight at home out of love to their own safety.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 136.—"*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,*" etc. Thus uniformly is the character of God's people represented—not merely as those who are *free from*—but as "*those that sigh and cry for—all the abominations that are done in the midst of the land*": Ez. ix. 4. And who does not see what an enlarged sphere still presents itself on every side for the unrestrained exercise of Christian compassion? The appalling spectacle of a world apostatized from God, of multitudes sporting with everlasting destruction—

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as if the God of heaven were "a man that he should lie" is surely enough to force "*rivers of waters*" from the hearts of those that are concerned for his honour. What a mass of sin ascends as a cloud before the Lord, from a single heart! Add the aggregate of a village—a town—a country—a world! every day—every hour—every moment. Well might the "*rivers of waters*' rise to an overflowing tide, ready to burst its barriers.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 136.—"*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.*"—The vices of the religious are the shame of religion: the sight of this hath made the stoutest champions of Christ melt into tears. David was one of those great worthies of the world, not matchable in his times; yet he weeps. Did he tear in pieces a bear like a kid? Rescue a lamb with the death of a lion? Foil a mighty giant, that had dared the whole army of God? Did he like a whirlwind, bear and beat down his enemies before him; and now, does he, like a child or a woman, fall a-weeping? Yes, he had heard the name of God blasphemed, seen his holy rites prophaned, his statutes vilipended, and violence offered to the pure chastity of that holy virgin, religion; this resolved that valiant heart into tears: "*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes.*"—*Thomas Adams.*

*Verse* 136.—My soul frequently spent itself in such breathings after conformity to the law of God as the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm is filled with throughout: "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! My heart breaketh through the longing it hath to thy commands at all times; incline my heart that I may keep them alway unto the end," and the like. This appeared further in a fixed dislike of the least inconformity to the law, either in myself or others. Now; albeit I was always suitably affected with my own or others' breaches, yet this was my burden; I wished always that rivers of tears might run down mine eyes, because I, or other transgressors, kept not God's law.—*Thomas Halyburton*, 1674—1712.

*Verse* 136.—If we grieve not for others, their sin may become ours. Ezek. ix. 8; 1 Cor. v. 2.—*William Nicholson.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 137 TO 144.

RIGHTEOUS *art* thou, O LORD, and upright *are* thy judgments.

138 Thy testimonies *that* thou hast commanded *are* righteous and very faithful.

139 My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

140 Thy word *is* very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

141 I *am* small and despised: *yet* do not I forget thy precepts.

142 Thy righteousness *is* an everlasting righteousness, and thy law *is* the truth.

143 Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: *yet* thy commandments *are* my delights.

144 The righteousness of thy testimonies *is* everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

This passage deals with the perfect righteousness of Jehovah and his word, and expresses the struggles of a holy soul in reference to that righteousness. The initial letter with which every verse commences in the Hebrew is P, and the keyword to us is PURITY.

137. "*Righteous art thou, O* LORD." The Psalmist has not often used the name of Jehovah in this vast composition. The whole psalm shows him to have been a deeply religious man, thoroughly familiar with the things of God; and such persons never use the holy name of God carelessly, nor do they even use it at all frequently in comparison with the thoughtless and the ungodly. Familiarity begets reverence in this case. Here he uses the sacred name in worship. He praises God by ascribing to him perfect righteousness. God is always right, and he is always actively right, that is, righteous. This quality is bound up in our very idea of God. We cannot imagine an unrighteous God. "*And upright are thy judgments.*" Here he extols God's word, or recorded judgments, as being right, even as their Author is righteous. That which comes from the Righteous God is itself righteous. Jehovah both saith and doth that which is right, and that alone. This is a great stay to the soul in time of trouble. When we are most sorely afflicted, and cannot see the reason for the dispensation, we may fall back upon this most sure and certain fact, that God is righteous, and his dealings with us are righteous too. It should be our glory to sing this brave confession when all things around us appear to suggest the contrary. This is the richest adoration—this which rises from the lips of faith when carnal reason mutters about undue severity, and the like.

138. "*Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.*" All that which God hath testified in his word is right and truthful. It is righteous, and may be relied upon for the present; it is faithful, and may be trusted in for the future. About every portion of the inspired testimonies there is a divine authority, they are issued and published by God's *command*, and they bear the impress of the royal style which carries omnipotence about it. Not only the precepts but the promises also are commanded of the Lord, and so are all the teachings of Scripture. It is not left to our choice whether we will accept them or no; they are issued by royal command, and are not to be questioned. Their characteristic is that they are like the Lord who has proclaimed them, they are the essence of justice and the soul of truth. God's word is

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righteous and cannot be impeached; it is faithful and cannot be questioned; it is true from the beginning, and it will be true unto the end.

Dwell upon that sweet word—"*very faithful.*" What a mercy that we have a God to deal with who is scrupulously faithful, true to all the items and details of his promises, punctual to time, steadfast during all time. Well may we risk all upon a word which is "ever faithful, ever sure."

139. In the last two verses David spoke concerning his God and his law; here he speaks of himself, and says, "*My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words*": this was no doubt occasioned by his having so clear a sense of the admirable character of God's word. His zeal was like a fire burning within his soul. The sight of man's forgetfulness of God acted as a fierce blast to excite the fire to a more vehement flame, and it blazed until it was ready to consume him. David could not bear that men should forget God's words. He was ready to forget himself, ay, to consume himself, because these men forgot God. The ungodly were David's enemies: his enemies, because they hated him for his godliness; his enemies, because he abhorred them for their ungodliness. These men had gone so far in iniquity that they not only violated and neglected the commands of God, but they appeared actually to have forgotten them. This put David into a great heat; he burned with indignation. How dare they trample on sacred things! How could they utterly ignore the commands of God himself! He was astonished, and filled with holy anger.

140. "*Thy word is very pure.*" It is truth distilled, holiness in its quintessence. In the word of God there is no admixture of error or sin. It is pure in its sense, pure in its language, pure in its spirit, pure in its influence, and all this to the very highest degree—"*very* pure." "*Therefore thy servant loveth it,*" which is a proof that he himself was pure in heart, for only those who are pure love God's word because of its purity. His heart was knit to the word because of its glorious holiness and truth. He admired it, delighted in it, sought to practise it, and longed to come under its purifying power.

141. "*I am small and despised: yet do I not forget thy precepts.*" That fault of forgetfulness which he condemned in others (verse 139) could not be charged upon himself. His enemies made no account of him, regarded him as a man without power or ability, and therefore looked down upon him. He appears to accept the situation and humbly take the lowest room, but he carries God's word with him. How many a man has been driven to do some ill action in order to reply to the contempt of his enemies: to make himself conspicuous he has either spoken or acted in a manner which he could not justify. The beauty of the Psalmist's piety was that it was calm and well-balanced, and as he was not carried away by flattery, so was he not overcome by shame. If small, he the more jealously attended to the smaller duties; and if despised, he was the more in earnest to keep the despised commandments of God.

142. "*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.*" Having in a previous verse ascribed righteousness to God, he now goes on to declare that that righteousness is unchanging and endures from age to age. This is the joy and glory of the saints, that what God is he always will be, and his mode of procedure towards the sons of men is immutable: having kept his promise, and dealt out justice among his people, he will do so world without end. Both the righteousnesses and the unrighteousnesses of men come to an end, but the righteousness of God is without end. "*And thy law is the truth.*" As God is love, so his law is the truth, the very essence of truth, truth applied to ethics, truth in action, truth upon the judgment-seat. We hear great disputes about, "What is truth?" The holy Scriptures are the only answer to that question. Note, that they are not only true, but the truth itself. We may not say of them that they contain the truth, but that they are the truth: "thy law is the truth." There is nothing false about

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the law or preceptory part of Scripture. Those who are obedient thereto shall find that they are walking in a way consistent with fact, while those who act contrary thereto are walking in a vain show.

143. "*Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me.*" This affliction may have arisen from his circumstances, or from the cruelty of his enemies, or from his own internal conflicts, but certain it is that he was the subject of much distress, a distress which apprehended him, and carried him away a captive to its power. His griefs, like fierce dogs, had taken hold upon him; he felt their teeth. He had double trouble: trouble without and anguish within, as the apostle Paul put it, "without were fightings and within were fears." "*Yet thy commandments are my delights.*" Thus he became a riddle; troubled, and yet delighted; in anguish, and yet in pleasure. The child of God can understand this enigma, for well he knows that while he is cast down on account of what he sees within himself he is all the more lifted up by what he sees in the word. He is delighted with the commandments, although he is troubled because he cannot perfectly obey them. He finds abundant light in the commandments, and by the influence of that light he discovers and mourns over his own darkness. Only the man who is acquainted with the struggles of the spiritual life will understand the expression before us. Let the reader herein find a balance in which to weigh himself. Does he find even when he is begirt with sorrow that it is a delightful thing to do the will of the Lord? Does he find more joy in being sanctified than sorrow in being chastised? Then the spot of God's children is upon him.

144. "*The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting.*" First he had said that God's testimonies were righteous, then that they were everlasting, and now that their righteousness is everlasting. Thus he gives us a larger and more detailed account of the word of God the longer he is engaged in writing upon it. The more we say in praise of holy writ, the more we may say and the more we can say. God's testimonies to man cannot be assailed, they are righteous from beginning to end; and though ungodly men have opposed the divine justice, especially in the plan of salvation, they have always failed to establish any charge against the Most High. Long as the earth shall stand, long as there shall be a single intelligent creature in the universe, it will be confessed that God's plans of mercy are in all respects marvellous proofs of his love of justice: even that he may be gracious Jehovah will not be unjust. "*Give me understanding, and I shall live.*" This is a prayer which he is constantly praying, that God will give him understanding. Here he evidently considers that such a gift is essential to his living. To live without understanding is not to live the life of a man, but to be dead while we live. Only as we know and apprehend the things of God can we be said to enter into life. The more the Lord teaches us to admire the eternal rightness of his word, and the more he quickens us to the love of such rightness, the happier and the better we shall be. As we love life, and seek many days that we may see good, it behoves us to seek immortality in the everlasting word which liveth and abideth for ever, and to seek good in that renewal of our entire nature which begins with the enlightenment of the understanding and passes on to the regeneration of the entire man. Here is our need of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, and the guide of all the quickened ones, who shall lead us into all truth. O, for the visitations of his grace at this good hour!

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## NOTES ON VERSES 137 TO 144.

S. Jerome, whom most of the mediævalists follow, explains *Tsaddi* as meaning *justice* or *righteousness*, which, however, is צֶדֶק, *tsedek*. But he is so far right that there is a play in this strophe on the sound of the initial letter, as in the case of *Gemol;* for the very first word, righteous, is צַדִּיק, *tsaddik*, and the whole scope of the strophe is the strong grasp which even the young and inexperienced soul can have of righteousness amidst the troubles of the world.—*Neale and Littledale.*

All these verses begin with *Tsaddi*, the eighteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet; 137, 142, 144, with some form of the word which we render *righteous*, or *righteousness;* each of the remainder with a wholly different word.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 137.—"*Righteous art thou, O* LORD," etc. Here David, sore troubled with grief for the wickedness of his enemies, yea, tempted greatly to impatience and distrust, by looking to their prosperous estate, notwithstanding their so gross impiety, doth now show unto us a three-fold ground of comfort, which in this dangerous temptation upheld him. The first is, a consideration of that which God is in himself; namely, just and righteous: the second, a consideration of the equity of his word; the third, a view of his constant truth, declared in his working and doing according to his word. When we find ourselves tempted to distrust by looking to the prosperity of the wicked, let us look up to God, and consider his nature, his word, his works, and we shall find comfort.

"*Righteous art thou.*" This is the first ground of comfort—a meditation of the righteousness of God's nature; he alters not with times, he changes not with persons, he is, alway and unto all, one and the same righteous and holy God. Righteousness is essential to him, it is himself; and he can no more defraud the godly of their promised comforts, not let the wicked go unpunished in their sins, than he can deny himself to be God, which is impossible.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 137.—"*Righteous art thou, O* LORD," etc. Essentially, originally, and of himself; naturally, immutably and universally, in all his ways and works of nature and grace; in his thoughts, purposes, counsels, and decrees; in all the dispensations of his providence; in redemption, in the justification of a sinner, in the pardon of sin, and in the gift of eternal life through Christ. "*And upright are thy judgments.*" They are according to the rules of justice and equity. He refers to the precepts of the word, the doctrines of the gospel, as well as the judgments of God inflicted on wicked men, and all the providential dealings of God with his people, and also the final judgment. —*John Gill.*

*Verse* 137.—"*Righteous art thou, O* LORD," etc. Here is much to keep the children of God in awe. The Lord is a righteous God: though they have found mercy and taken sanctuary in his grace, the Lord is impartial in his justice. God that did not spare the angels when they sinned, nor his Son when he was a sinner by imputation, will not spare you, though you are the dearly beloved of his soul: Prov. xi. 31. The sinful courses of God's children occasion bitterness enough; they never venture upon sin, but with great loss. If Paul give way to a little pride, God will humble him. If any give way to sin, their pilgrimage will be made uncomfortable. Eli falls into negligence and indulgence, then is the ark of God taken, his two sons are slain in battle, his daughter-in-law dies, he himself breaks his neck. Oh! the wonderful tragedies that sin works in the houses of the children of God! David, when he intermeddled with forbidden fruit, was driven from his palace, his concubines defiled, his own son slain; a great many calamities did light upon him. Therefore the children of God have cause to fear; for the Lord is a just God, and they will find it so. Here upon earth he hath

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reserved liberty to visit their iniquity with rods, and their transgression with scourges. I must press you to imitate God's righteousness: "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him": 1 John ii. 29. You have a righteous God; and this part of his character you should copy out.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 137.—David's great care, when he was under the afflicting hand of God, was to clear the Lord of injustice. Oh! Lord, saith he, there is not the least show, spot, stain, blemish, or mixture of injustice, in all the afflictions thou hast brought upon me. I desire to take shame to myself, and to set to my seal, that the Lord is righteous, and that there is no injustice, no cruelty, nor no extremity in all that the Lord hath brought upon me. He sweetly and readily subscribes unto the righteousness of God in those sharp and smart afflictions that God exercised him with. "*Righteous art thou, O* LORD, *and upright are thy judgments.*" God's judgments are always just; he never afflicts but in faithfulness. His will is the rule of justice; and therefore a gracious soul dares not cavil nor question his proceedings.—*Thomas Brooks.*

*Verse* 137.—The hundred and thirty-seventh verse, like the twenty-fifth, is associated with the sorrows of an Imperial penitent.* When the deposed and captive Emperor Maurice was led out for execution by the usurper Phocas, his five sons were previously murdered one by one in his presence; and at each fatal blow he patiently exclaimed, "*Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments.*"—*Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 138.—"*Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.*" The force of this expression is much feebler than that of the original, which literally may be rendered, "Thou hast commanded righteousness, thy testimonies, and truth exceedingly." So the Septuagint hath it. Righteousness and truth were his testimonies; the testimonies were one with his righteousness and truth. The English translation gives *the quality of the testimonies;* the Hebrew gives *that which is commanded;* as if we might say, Thou hast enjoined righteousness to be thy testimonies, and truth exceedingly.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 138.—"*Thy testimonies.*" The word of God is called his *testimony*, both because it testifies his will, which he will have us to do; as also because it testifies unto men truly what shall become of them, whether good or evil. Men by nature are curious to know their end, rather than careful to mend their life; and for this cause seek answers where they never get good: but if they would know, let them go to the word and testimony; they need not to seek any other oracle. If the word of God testify good things unto them, they have cause to rejoice; if otherwise it witnesseth evil unto them, let them haste to prevent it, or else it will assuredly overtake them.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 138.—"*Righteous and very faithful.*" Literally, "faithfulness exceedingly." Harsh and severe as they may seem, they are all thoroughly for man's highest good.—*William Kay.*

*Verse* 139.—"*My zeal hath consumed me.*" "*Zeal*" is a high degree of love; and when the object of that love is ill treated, it venteth itself in a mixture of grief and indignation, which are sufficient to wear and "consume" the heart. This will be the case where men rightly conceive of that dishonour which is continually done to God by creatures whom he hath made and redeemed. But never could the verse be uttered, with such fulness of truth and propriety, by any one, as by the Son of God, who had such a sense of his Father's glory, and of man's sin, as no person else ever had. And, accordingly, when his zeal had exerted itself in purging the temple,

* Gibbon. Decline and Fall; ch. xlvi.

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St. John tells us, "his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." The place where it is so written is Psalm lxix. 9, and the passage is exactly parallel to this before us.—*George Horne.*

*Verse* 139.—"*My zeal hath consumed me,*" etc. Zeal is the heat or intension of the affections; it is a holy warmth, whereby our love and anger are drawn out to the utmost for God, and his glory. Now, our love to God and his ways, and our hatred of wickedness, should be increased, because of ungodly men. Cloudy and dark colours in a table, make those that are fresh and lively to appear more beautiful; others' sin should make God and godliness more amiable in thine eyes. Thy heart should take fire by striking on such cold flints. David by a holy antiperistasis, did kindle from others' coldness: "*My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.*" Cold blasts make a fire to flame the higher, and burn the hotter.—*George Swinnock.*

*Verse* 139.—"*My zeal hath consumed me.*" The fire of zeal, like the fire which consumed Solomon's sacrifice, cometh down from heaven; and true zealots are not those salamanders that always live in the fire of hatred and contention; but seraphims, burning with the spiritual fire of divine love. And there true zeal inflames the desires and affections of the soul. If it be true zeal, then tract of time, multitude of discouragements, falseness of men deserting the cause, strength of oppositions, will not tire out a man's spirit. Zeal makes men resolute, difficulties are but whetstones to their fortitude, it steels men's spirits with an undaunted resolution. This was the zeal that burned in the disciples (Luke xxiv. ), that consumed David here, and dried up the very marrow of Christ: John ii. 17.—*Abraham Wright.*

*Verse* 139.—"*My zeal hath consumed me.*" There are divers kinds of zeal: there is a zeal of the world, there is a zeal of the flesh, there is a zeal of false religion, there is a zeal of heresy, and there is a zeal of the true word of God. First, we see the zeal of the world maketh men to labour day and night to get a transitory thing. The zeal of the flesh tormenteth men's minds early and late for a momentary pleasure. The zeal of heresy maketh men travel and compass sea and land, for the maintaining and increasing of their opinion. Thus we see every man is eaten up with some kind of zeal. The drunkard is consumed with drunkenness, the whoremonger is spent with his whoredom, the heretic is eaten with heresies. Oh, how ought this to make us ashamed, who are so little eaten, spent, and consumed with the zeal of the word! And so much the rather, because godly zeal leaveth in us an advantage and a recompence, which the worldly and carnally zealous men have not. For when they have spent all the strength of their bodies, and powers of their mind, they have no gain or comfort left, but torment of conscience; and when they are outwardly spent, they are inwardly never the better: whereas the godly being concerned for a good thing, and eaten up with the zeal of God's glory, have this notable privilege and profit, that howsoever their outward man perisheth and decayeth, yet their inward man is still refreshed and nourished to everlasting life. Oh, what a benefit it is to be eaten up with the love and zeal of a good thing!—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 139.—"*Have forgotten thy words.*" A proper phrase to set forth those in the bosom of the visible church who do not wholly deny and reject the word and rule of Scripture, but yet live on as though they had forgotten it: they do not observe it; as if God had never spoken any such thing, or given them any such rule. They that reject and condemn such things as the word enforceth, surely do not remember to do them.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 140.—"*Thy word is very pure.*" In the original, "tried, refined, purified, like gold in the furnace," absolutely perfect, without the dross of vanity and fallibility, which runs through human writings. The more we try the promises, the surer we shall find them. Pure gold is so fixed, that

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Boerhaave informs us of an ounce of it set in the eye of a glass furnace for two months, without losing a single grain.—*George Horne.*

*Verse* 140.—"*Thy word is very pure; therefore,*" etc. The word of God is not only "*pure,*" free from all base admixture, but it is a *purifier;* it cleanses from sin and guilt every heart with which it comes into contact. "Now ye are clean," said Jesus Christ to his disciples, "by the word which I have spoken unto you": John xv. 3. It is this its pure quality combined with its tendency to purify every nature that yields to its holy influence, that endears it to every child of God. Here it is that he finds those views of the divine character, those promises, those precepts, those representations of the deformity of sin, of the beauty of holiness, which lead him, above all things, to seek conformity to the divine image. A child of God in his best moments does not wish the word of God brought down to a level with his own imperfect character, but desires rather that his character may be gradually raised to a conformity to that blessed word. Because it is altogether pure, and because it tends to convey to those who make it their constant study a measure of its own purity, the child of God loves it, and delights to meditate in it day and night.—*John Morison.*

*Verse* 140.—"*Thy word is very pure.*" Before I knew the word of God in spirit and in truth, for its great antiquity, its interesting narratives, its impartial biography, its pure morality, its sublime poetry, in a word, for its beautiful and wonderful variety, I preferred it to all other books; but since I have entered into its spirit, like the Psalmist, I love it above all things for its purity; and desire, whatever else I read, it may tend to increase my knowledge of the Bible, and strengthen my affection for its divine and holy truths.—*Sir William Jones,* 1746—1794.

*Verse* 140.—"*Thy word.*" Let us refresh our minds and our memories with some of the Scripture adjuncts connected with "the word," and realize, in some degree at least, the manifold relations which it bears both to God and our souls. It is called "the word of Christ," because much of it was given by him, and it all bears testimony to him. . . . It is called "the word of his grace," because the glorious theme on which it loves to expatiate is *grace,* and especially grace as it is seen in Christ's dying love for sinful men. It is called ὁ λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ, "the word of the cross" (1 Cor. i. 18), because in the crucifixion of the divine Redeemer we see eternal mercy in its brightest lustre. It is called "the word of the gospel," because it brings glad tidings of great joy to all nations. It is called "the word of the kingdom," because it holds out to all believers the hope of an everlasting kingdom of righteousness and peace. It is called "the word of salvation," because the purpose for which it was given is the salvation of sinners. It is called "the word of truth," because, as Chillingworth says, it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without mixture of error for its contents. And we will only add, it is called "the word of life," because it reveals to a sinful, perishing world the doctrines of life and immortality.—*W. Graham, in "A Commentary on the First Epistle of John,"* 1857.

*Verse* 140.—"*Therefore thy servant loveth it.*" Love in God is the fountain of all his benefits extended to us; and love in man is the fountain of all our service and obedience to God. He loved us first to do us good; and hereof it comes that we have grace to love him next to do him service. Love is such a duty that the want thereof cannot be excused in any; for the poorest both may and should love God: yet without it all the rest thou canst do in his service is nothing; nay, not if thou shouldst give thy goods to the poor, and offer thy body to be burned. Small sacrifices, flowing from faith and love, are welcome to him, where greater without these are but abomination to him. Proofs of both we have in the widow's mite and Cain's rich oblation; whereof the one was rejected, the other received. Happy are we though we cannot say, "We have done as God commands," if out of a good heart we can say,—"We love to do what he commands."—*William Cowper.*

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*Verse* 140.—"*Therefore thy servant loveth it.*" Of all our grounds and reasons of love to the word of God, the most noble and excellent is to love the word for its purity. This showeth indeed that we are made partakers of the Divine nature: 2 Pet. i. 4. For I pray you mark, when we hate evil as evil, and love good as good, we have the same love and hatred that God hath. When once we come to love things because they are pure, it is a sign that we have the same love that God hath.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 140.—"*Thy servant loveth it.*" Otherwise, indeed, the Psalmist would not have been the Lord's servant at all. But he glories in the title because he delights in the pure service.—*John Stephen.*

*Verses* 140, 141.—God's own utterance is indeed without spot, and therefore not to be carped at; it is pure, fire-proved, noblest metal, therefore he loves it, and does not, though young and lightly esteemed, care for the remonstrances of his proud opponents, who are older and more learned than himself.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

*Verse* 141.—"*I am small and despised,*" or, *I have been.* Some versions render it *young;* as if it had respect to the time of his anointing by Samuel, when he was overlooked and despised in his father's family (1 Sam. xvi. 11, and xvii. 28); but the word here used is not expressive of age, but of state, condition, and circumstances; and the meaning is, that he was little in his own esteem, and in the esteem of men, and was despised; and that on account of religion, in which he was a type of Christ (Ps. xxii. 6, and Isai. liii. 3), and which is the common lot of good men, who are treated by the world as the filth of it, and the offscouring of all things.—*John Gill.*

*Verse* 141.—"*I am small.*" They that love God may be reduced to a mean, low, and afflicted condition; the Lord seeth it meet for divers reasons: 1. That they may know their happiness is not in this world, and so the more long for heaven, and delight in heavenly things. 2. It is necessary to cut off the provisions of the flesh and the fuel of their lusts. A rank soil breedeth weeds; and when we sail with a full stream we are apt to be carried away with it. 3. That they may be more sensible of his displeasure against their sins and scandalous carriage by which they have dishonoured him, and provoked the pure eyes of his glory. 4. That they may learn to live upon the promises, and learn to exercise suffering graces; especially dependence upon God, who can support us without a temporal, visible interest. 5. That God may convince the enemies that there is a people that do sincerely serve him, and not for carnal, selfish ends: Job i. 6. That his glory may be more seen in their deliverance; and therefore, before God doth appear for his children, he bringeth them very low.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 141.—"*Small.*" This applies to David in his early days of trouble and persecution. It is difficult to find any other individual to whom it is so suitable.—*James G. Murphy.*

*Verse* 141.—A notable example to the shame of them, that perhaps will serve and praise God in their prosperity, and when they are increased; but let affliction or want come, and then they have little heart to do it.—*Abraham Wright.*

*Verse* 141.—"*Yet do not I forget thy precepts.*" God observeth what we do in our trouble: "If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart": Ps. xliv. 20, 21. If we slacken our service to God, or fall off to any degree of apostacy, the Judge of hearts knoweth all: God knoweth whether we would have depraved and corrupt doctrine, worship, or ordinances; or whether we will faithfully adhere to him, to his word, and worship, and ordinances, whatever it cost us.

In our poor and despicable condition we see more cause to love the word than we did before; because we experience supports and comforts which

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we have thereby: "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience," etc. (Rom. v. 8); "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ": 2 Cor. i. 5. God hath special consolations for his afflicted and despised people, and makes their consolation by Christ to run parallel with, and keep pace with, their sufferings for Christ.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 141.—"*Yet do not I forget thy precepts.*" We see by experience that our affection leaves anything from the time it goes out of our remembrance. We cease to love when we cease to remember; but earnest love ever renews remembrance of that which is beloved. The first step of defection is to forget what God hath commanded, and what we are obliged in duty to do to him; and upon this easily follows the offending of God by our transgression. Such beasts as did not chew their cud, under the law were accounted unclean, and not meet to be sacrificed unto God: that was but a figure, signifying unto us that a man who hath received good things from God, and doth not think upon them, cannot feel the sweetness of them, and so cannot be thankful to God.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 142.—"*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.*" Here the law of God is honoured by the additional encomium, that it is everlasting righteousness and truth; as if it had been said, that all other rules of life, with whatever attractions they may appear to be recommended, are but a shadow, which quickly vanishes away. The Psalmist, no doubt, indirectly contrasts the doctrine of the law with all the human precepts which were ever delivered, that he may bring all the faithful in subjection to it, since it is the school of perfect wisdom. There may be more of plausibility in the refined and subtle disquisitions of men; but there is in them nothing firm or solid at bottom, as there is in God's law. This firmness of the divine law he proves in the following verse from one instance—the continual comfort he found in it when grievously harassed with temptations. And the true test of the profit we have reaped from it is, when we oppose to all the distresses of whatever kind which may straiten us, the consolation derived from the word of God, that thereby all sadness may be effaced from our minds. David here expresses something more than he did in the preceding verse; for there he only said that he reverently served God, although from his rough and hard treatment he might seem to lose his labour; but now when distressed and tormented, he affirms that he finds in the law of God the most soothing delight, which mitigates all griefs, and not only tempers their bitterness, but also seasons them with a certain sweetness. Assuredly when this taste does not exist to afford us delight, nothing is more natural than for us to be swallowed up of sorrow.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 142.—"*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.*" Not only righteous at the first giving out, but righteous in all ages and times; and should we slight this rule that will hold for ever? In the world, new lords, new laws; men vary and change their designs and purposes; privileges granted to-day may be repealed to-morrow; but this word will hold true for ever. Our justification by Christ is irrevocable; that part of righteousness is everlasting. Be sure you are justified now upon terms of the gospel, and you shall be justified for ever: your forgiveness is an everlasting forgiveness, and your peace is an everlasting peace: "I will remember their sin no more": Jer. xxxi. 34. So the other righteousness of sanctification, it is for ever; approve yourselves to God now, and you will approve yourselves at the day of judgment.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 142.—"*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,*" etc. The original is better expressed thus, "Thy righteousness is righteousness everlastingly, and thy law is truth." So the Septuagint. The English translation expresses the *perpetuity* of the righteousness, the original expresses also the *character* of it. . . . God's righteousness is essentially and eternally



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righteousness. The expressions are absolute; there is only this righteousness, and only this truth.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 142.—"*Thy law is the truth.*" 1. It is the *chief* truth. There is some truth in the laws of men and the writings of men, even of heathens; but they are but sorry fragments and scraps of truth, that have escaped since the fall. 2. It is the *only* truth; that is, the only revelation of the mind of God that you can build upon. It is the rule of truth. 3. It is the *pure* truth. In it there is nothing but the truth, without the mixture of falsehood; every part is true as truth itself. It is true in the promises, threatenings, doctrines, histories, precepts, prohibitions. 4. It is *the whole* truth. It containeth all things necessary for the salvation of those that yield up themselves to be instructed by it.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 143.—"*Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights.*" This is strange, that in the midst of anguish David had *delight:* but indeed the sweetness of God's word is best perceived under the bitterness of the cross. The joy of Christ and the joy of the world cannot consist together. A heart delighted with worldly joy cannot feel the consolations of the Spirit; the one of these destroys the other: but in sanctified trouble, the comforts of God's word are felt and perceived in a most sensible manner. Many a time hath David protested this delight of his in the word of God; and truly it is a great argument of godliness, when men come not only to reverence it, but to love it, and delight in it. Let this be considered by those unhappy men who hear it of custom, and count it but a weariness.—*Abraham Wright.*

*Verse* 143.—"*Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me,*" or "*found me,*" etc. We need not take pains, as many do, "to find trouble and anguish;" for they will, one day, "find us." In that day the revelations of God must be to us instead of all worldly "delights" and pleasures, which will then have forsaken us; and how forlorn and desolate will be our state if we should have no other delights, no other pleasures, to succeed them, and to accompany us into eternity! Let our study be then in the Scriptures, if we expect our comfort in them in time to come.—*George Horne.*

*Verse* 143.—"*Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me.*" You may conceive a bold figure here, as if Trouble and Anguish were being sent out against the helpless sons of men. These, like enemies, were going round. Instead of seizing upon the wicked, they had found the righteous man. So it was by the ordering of God. I suppose many of us have remarked, that the believer is never long at ease. He is in the world; he is in the flesh; there is indwelling sin; there are enemies around; there is the great enemy; besides all this, the Lord, for wise purposes, hides his face. Then the believer is in trouble and anguish.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 143.—"*Have taken hold on me.*" Hebrew, *found me.* Like dogs tracking out a wild beast hiding or fleeing.—*A. R. Fausset.*

*Verse* 143.—"*Thy commandments are my delights.*" Delight in moral things (saith Aquinas) is the rule by which we may judge of men's goodness or badness. *Delectatio est quies voluntatis in bono.* Men are good and bad, as the objects of their delight are: they are good who delight in good things, and they are evil who delight in evil things.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 144.—"*The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting.*" Thy *moral law* was not made for one people, or for one particular time; it is as imperishable as thy nature, and of endless obligation. It is that law by which all the children of Adam shall be judged. "*Give me understanding.*" To know and practise it. "*And I shall live.*" Shall glorify thee, and live eternally; not for the *merit* of having done it, but because thou didst fulfil the work of the law in my heart, having saved me from condemnation by it. —*Adam Clarke.*

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*Verse* 144.—"*Give me understanding, and I shall live.*" I read it in connection with the preceding clause; for although David desires to have his mind enlightened by God, yet he does not conceive of any other way by which he was to obtain an enlightened understanding than by his profiting aright in the study of the law. Further, he here teaches that men cannot, properly speaking, be said to live when they are destitute of the light of heavenly wisdom; and as the end for which men are created is not that, like swine or asses, they may stuff their bellies, but that they may exercise themselves in the knowledge and service of God, when they turn away from such employment their life is worse than a thousand deaths. David therefore protests that for him to live was not merely to be fed with meat and drink, and to enjoy earthly comforts, but to aspire after a better life, which he could not do save under the guidance of faith. This is a very necessary warning; for although it is universally acknowledged that man is born with this distinction, that he excels the lower animals in intelligence, yet the great bulk of mankind, as if with deliberate purpose, stifle whatever light God pours into their understandings. I indeed admit that all men desire to be sharp-witted; but how few aspire to heaven, and consider that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Since, then, meditation upon the celestial life is buried by earthly care, men do nothing else than plunge into the grave, so that while living to the world, they die to God. Under the term life, however, the prophet denotes the utmost he could wish. Lord, as if he had said, although I am already dead, yet if thou art pleased to illumine my mind with the knowledge of heavenly truth, this grace alone will be sufficient to revive me.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 144.—"*Give me understanding, and I shall live.*" The saving knowledge of God's testimonies is the only way to live. There is a threefold life. 1. Life natural. 2. Life spiritual, and, 3. Life eternal. In all these considerations may the point be made good.

First. Life is taken for the *life of nature*, or the life of the body, or life temporal, called "this life" in Scripture: 1 Cor. xv. 19; 1 Tim. iv. 8. Life is better preserved in a way of obedience than by evil-doing; that provoketh God to cast us off, and exposes us to dangers. It is not in the power of the world to make us live or die a day sooner or longer than God pleaseth. If God will make us happy, they cannot make us miserable: therefore, "*Give me understanding, and I shall live*"; that is, lead a comfortable and happy life for the present. Prevent sin, and you prevent danger. Obedience is the best way to preserve life temporal: as great a paradox as it seems to the world, it is a Scripture truth, "Keep my commandments, and live" (Prov. iv. 4); and, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life" (verse 13); and, "Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour" (Prov. iii. 16); and, "She is a tree of life" (verse 18). The knowledge and practice of the word is the only means to live comfortably and happily here, as well as for ever hereafter.

Secondly. *Life spiritual;* that is twofold, the life of justification, and the life of sanctification.

1. The life of justification: "The free gift came upon all men unto justification of life": Rom. v. 18. He is dead, not only on whom the hangman hath done his work, but also he on whom the judge hath passed sentence, and the law pronounceth him dead. In this sense we were all dead, and justification is called justification to life; there is no living in this sense without knowledge: "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many": Isai. liii. 11. We live by faith, and faith cometh by hearing, and hearing doeth no good unless the Lord giveth understanding; as meats nourish not unless received and digested.

2. The life of sanctification: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins": Eph. ii. 1. And men live not properly till they

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live the life of grace; they live a false, counterfeit life, not a blessed, happy, certain, and true life. Now, this life is begun and carried on by saving knowledge: "The new man which is renewed in knowledge": Col. iii. 10. Again, men are said to be "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them:" Eph. iv. 18. They that are ignorant are dead in sin: life spiritual cometh by knowledge. Hence beginneth the change of the inward man, and thenceforth we live. "*Give me understanding,*" *ut vere in te vivam*, that the true life begun in me may grow and increase daily, but never be quenched by sin.

Thirdly. *Life everlasting*, or our blessed estate in heaven. So it is said of the saints departed, they all live unto God: Luke xx. 38. And this is called the water of life, the tree of life, the crown of life; properly this is life. What is the present life in comparison of everlasting life? The present life, it is *mors vitalis*, a living death; or *mortalis vita*, a dying life, a kind of death; it is always *in fluxu*, like a stream: it runneth from us as fast as it cometh to us: "He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not": Job xiv. 2. We die as fast as we live: it differeth but as the point from the line where it terminateth. It is not one and the same, no permanent thing; it is like the shadow of a star in a flowing stream. Its contentments are base and low, called "the life of thine hand": Isai. lvii. 10. It is patched up of several creatures, fain to ransack the storehouses of nature to support a ruinous fabric. And compare it with the life of grace here, it doth not exempt us from sin, nor miseries. Our capacities are narrow. We are full of fears, and doubts, and dangers; but in the life of glory we shall neither sin nor sorrow any more. This is meant here: "*The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live*"; it is chiefly meant of the life of glory. This is the fruit of saving knowledge, when we so know God and Christ as to come to God by him.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 144.—"*I shall live.*" I shall be kept from those sins which deserve and bring death.—*Matthew Pool.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 145 TO 152.

I CRIED with *my* whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.

146 I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.

148 Mine eyes prevent the *night* watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

149 Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.

151 Thou *art* near, O LORD; and all thy commandments *are* truth.

152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

This section is given up to memories of prayer. The Psalmist describes the time and the manner of his devotions, and pleads with God for deliverance from his troubles. He who has been with God in the closet will find God with him in the furnace. If we have cried we shall be answered. Delayed answers may drive us to importunity; but we need not fear the ultimate result, since God's promises are not uncertain, but are "founded for ever." The whole passage shows us: How he prayed (verse 145). What he prayed for (146). When he prayed (147). How long he prayed (148). What he pleaded (149). What happened (150). How he was rescued (151). What was his witness as to the whole matter (152).

145.—"*I cried with my whole heart.*" His prayer was a sincere, plaintive, painful, natural utterance, as of a creature in pain. We cannot tell whether at all times he used his voice when he thus cried; but we are informed of something which is of much greater consequence, he cried with his heart. Heart-cries are the essence of prayer. He mentions the unity of his heart in this holy engagement. His whole soul pleaded with God, his entire affections, his united desires all went out towards the living God. It is well when a man can say as much as this of his prayers: it is to be feared that many never cried to God with their whole heart in all their lives. There may be no beauty of elocution about such prayers, no length of expression, no depth of doctrine, nor accuracy of diction; but if the whole heart be in them they will find their way to the heart of God. "*Hear me, O* LORD." He desires of Jehovah that his cries may not die upon the air, but that God may have respect to them. True supplicants are not satisfied with the exercise itself, they have an end and object in praying, and they look out for it. If God does not hear prayer we pray in vain. The term "hear" is often used in Scripture to express attention and consideration. In one sense God hears every sound that is made on earth, and every desire of every heart; but David meant much more; he desired a kindly, sympathetic hearing, such as a physician gives to his patient when he tells him his pitiful story. He asked that the Lord would draw near, and listen with friendly ear to the voice of his complaint, with the view of pitying him and helping him. Observe, that his whole-hearted prayer goes to the Lord alone; he has no second hope or help. "Hear me, O LORD," is the full range of his petition and

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expectation. "*I will keep thy statutes.*" He could not expect the Lord to hear him if he did not hear the Lord, neither would it be true that he prayed with his whole heart unless it was manifest that he laboured with all his might to be obedient to the divine will. His object in seeking deliverance was that he might be free to fulfil his religion and carry out every ordinance of the Lord. He would be a free man that he might be at liberty to serve the Lord. Note well that a holy resolution goes well with an importunate supplication: David is determined to be holy, his whole heart goes with that resolve as well as with his prayers. He will keep God's statutes in his memory, in his affections, and in his actions. He will not wilfully neglect or violate any one of the divine laws.

146.—"*I cried unto thee.*" Again he mentions that his prayer was unto God alone. The sentence imports that he prayed vehemently, and very often; and that it had become one of the greatest facts of his life that he cried unto God. "*Save me.*" This was his prayer; very short, but very full. He needed saving, none but the Lord could save him, to him he cried, "Save me" from the dangers which surround me, from the enemies that pursue me, from the temptations which beset me, from the sins which accuse me. He did not multiply words, and men never do so when they are in downright earnest. He did not multiply objects, and men seldom do so when they are intent upon the one thing needful: "save me" was his one and only prayer. "*And I shall keep thy testimonies.*" This was his great object in desiring salvation, that he might be able to continue in a blameless life of obedience to God, that he might be able to believe the witness of God, and also to become himself a witness for God. It is a great thing when men seek salvation for so high an end. He did not ask to be delivered that he might sin with impunity; his cry was to be delivered from sin itself. He had vowed to keep the statutes or laws, here he resolves to keep the testimonies or doctrines, and so to be sound of head as well as clean of hand. Salvation brings all these good things in its train. David had no idea of a salvation which would allow him to live in sin, or abide in error: he knew right well that there is no saving a man while he abides in disobedience and ignorance.

147.—"*I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried.*" He was up before the sun, and began his pleadings before the dew began to leave the grass. Whatever is worth doing is worth doing speedily. This is the third time that he mentions that he cried. He cried, and cried, and cried again. His supplications had become so frequent, fervent, and intense, that he might hardly be said to be doing anything else from morning to night but crying unto his God. So strong was his desire after salvation that he could not rest in his bed; so eagerly did he seek it that at the first possible moment he was on his knees. "*I hoped in thy word.*" Hope is a very powerful means of strengthening us in prayer. Who would pray if he had no hope that God would hear him? Who would not pray when he has a good hope of a blessed issue to his entreaties? His hope was fixed upon God's word, and this is a sure anchorage, because God is true, and in no case has he ever run back from his promise, or altered the thing that has gone forth from his mouth. He who is diligent in prayer will never be destitute of hope. Observe that as the early bird gets the worm, so the early prayer is soon refreshed with hope.

148.—"*Mine eyes prevent the night watches.*" Or rather, *the watches.* Before the watchman cried the hour, he was crying to God. He did not need to be informed as to how the hours were flying, for every hour his heart was flying towards heaven. He began the day with prayer, and he continued in prayer through the watches of the day, and the watches of the night. The soldiers changed guard, but David did not change his holy occupation. Specially, however, at night did he keep his eyes open, and drive away sleep, that he might maintain communion with his God.

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He worshipped on from watch to watch as travellers journey from stage to stage. "*That I might meditate in thy word.*" This had become meat and drink to him. Meditation was the food of his hope, and the solace of his sorrow: the one theme upon which his thoughts ran was that blessed "word" which he continually mentions, and in which his heart rejoices. He preferred study to slumber; and he learned to forego his necessary sleep for much more necessary devotion. It is instructive to find meditation so constantly connected with fervent prayer: it is the fuel which sustains the flame. How rare an article is it in these days.

149.—"*Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness.*" Men find it very helpful to use their voices in prayer; it is difficult long to maintain the intensity of devotion unless we hear ourselves speak; hence David at length broke through his silence, arose from his quiet meditations, and began crying with voice as well as heart unto the Lord his God. Note, that he does not plead his own deservings, nor for a moment appeal for payment of a debt on account of merit; he takes the free-grace way, and puts it, "according unto thy lovingkindness." When God hears prayer according to his lovingkindness he overlooks all the imperfections of the prayer, he forgets the sinfulness of the offerer, and in pitying love he grants the desire though the suppliant be unworthy. It is according to God's lovingkindness to answer speedily, to answer frequently, to answer abundantly, yea, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think. Lovingkindness is one of the sweetest words in our language. Kindness has much in it that is most precious, but lovingkindness is doubly dear; it is the cream of kindness. "*O* LORD, *quicken me according to thy judgment.*" This is another of David's wise and ardent prayers. He first cried, "Save me;" then, "Hear me;" and now, "Quicken me." This is often the very best way of delivering us from trouble,—to give us more life that we may escape from death; and to add more strength to that life that we may not be overloaded with its burdens. Observe, that he asks to receive quickening according to God's judgment, that is, in such a way as should be consistent with infinite wisdom and prudence. God's methods of communicating greater vigour to our spiritual life are exceedingly wise; it would probably be in vain for us to attempt to understand them; and it will be our wisdom to wish to receive grace, not according to our notion of how it should come to us, but according to God's heavenly method of bestowing it. It is his prerogative to make alive as well as to kill, and that sovereign act is best left to his infallible judgment. Hath he not already given us to have life more and more abundantly? "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

150. "*They draw nigh that follow after mischief.*" He could hear their footfalls close behind him. They are not following him for his benefit, but for his hurt, and therefore the sound of their approach is to be dreaded. They are not prosecuting a good object, but persecuting a good man. As if they had not enough mischief in their own hearts, they are hunting after more. He sees them going a steeple-chase over hedge and ditch in order to bring mischief to himself, and he points them out to God, and entreats the Lord to fix his eyes upon them, and deal with them to their confusion. They were already upon him, and he was almost in their grip, and therefore he cries the more earnestly. "*They are far from thy law.*" A mischievous life cannot be an obedient one. Before these men could become persecutors of David they were obliged to get away from the restraints of God's law. They could not hate a saint and yet love the law. Those who keep God's law neither do harm to themselves nor to others. Sin is the greatest mischief in the world. David mentions this to the Lord in prayer, feeling some kind of comfort in the fact that those who hated him hated God also, and found it needful to get away from God before they could be free to act their cruel part towards himself. When we know that our enemies are God's

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enemies, and ours because they are his, we may well take comfort to ourselves.

151. "*Thou art near, O* LORD." Near as the enemy might be, God was nearer: this is one of the choicest comforts of the persecuted child of God. The Lord is near to hear our cries, and to speedily afford us succour. He is near to chase away our enemies, and to give us rest and peace. "*And all thy commandments are truth.*" God neither commands a lie, nor lies in his commands. Virtue is truth in action, and this is what God commands. Sin is falsehood in action, and this is what God forbids. If all God's commands are truth, then the true man will be glad to keep near to them, and therein he will find the true God near him. This sentence will be the persecuted man's protection from the false hearts that seek to do him mischief: God is near and God is true, therefore his people are safe. If at any time we fall into danger through keeping the commands of God we need not suppose that we have acted unwisely: we may, on the contrary, be quite sure that we are in the right way; for God's precepts are right and true. It is for this very reason that wicked men assail us: they hate the truth, and therefore hate those who do the truth. Their opposition may be our consolation; while God's presence upon our side is our glory and delight.

152. "*Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.*" David found of old that God had founded them of old, and that they would stand firm throughout all ages. It is a very blessed thing to be so early taught of God that we know substantial doctrines even from our youth. Those who think that David was a young man when he wrote this psalm will find it rather difficult to reconcile this verse with the theory; it is much more probable that he was now grown grey, and was looking back upon what he had known long before. He knew at the very first that the doctrines of God's word were settled before the world began, that they had never altered, and never could by any possibility be altered. He had begun by building on a rock, by seeing that God's testimonies were "founded," that is, grounded, laid as foundations, settled and established; and that with a view to all the ages that should come, during all the changes that should intervene. It was because David knew this that he had such confidence in prayer, and was so importunate in it. It is sweet to plead immutable promises with an immutable God. It was because of this that David learned to hope: a man cannot have much expectation from a changing friend, but he may well have confidence in a God who cannot change. It was because of this that he delighted in being near the Lord, for it is a most blessed thing to keep up close intercourse with a Friend who never varies. Let those who choose follow at the heels of the modern school and look for fresh light to break forth which will put the old light out of countenance; we are satisfied with the truth which is old as the hills and as fixed as the great mountains. Let "cultured intellects" invent another god, more gentle and effeminate than the God of Abraham; we are well content to worship Jehovah, who is eternally the same. Things everlastingly established are the joy of established saints. Bubbles please boys, but men prize those things which are solid and substantial, with a foundation and a bottom to them which will bear the test of the ages.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 145 TO 152.

*Verse* 145.—"*I cried with my whole heart.*" As a man cries most loudly when he cries with all his mouth opened; so a man prays most effectually when he prays with his whole heart. Neither doth this speech declare only the fervency of his affection; but it imports also that it was a great thing which he sought from God. And thou, when thou prayest, pray for great things; for things enduring, not for things perishing: pray not for silver, it is but rust; nor for gold, it is but metal; nor for possessions, they are but earth. Such prayer ascends not to God. He is a great God, and esteems himself dishonoured when great things with great affection are not sought from him.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 145.—"*I cried with my whole heart.*" In all your closet duties God looks first and most to your *hearts:* "My son, give me thine heart": Prov. xxiii. 26. It is not a piece, it is not a corner of the heart, that will satisfy the Maker of the heart; the heart is a treasure, a bed of spices, a royal throne wherein he delights. God looks not at the elegancy of your prayers, to see how neat they are; nor yet at the geometry of your prayers, to see how long they are; nor yet at the arithmetic of your prayers, to see how many they are; nor yet at the music of your prayers, nor yet at the sweetness of your voice, nor yet at the logic of your prayers; but at the sincerity of your prayers, how hearty they are. There is no prayer acknowledged, approved, accepted, recorded, or rewarded by God, but that wherein the heart is sincerely and wholly. The true mother would not have the child divided. God loves a broken and a contrite heart, so he loathes a divided heart: Ps. li. 17; James i. 8. God neither loves halting nor halving; he will be served truly and totally. The royal law is, "Thou shalt love and serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." Among the heathens, when the beasts were cut up for sacrifice, the first thing the priest looked upon was the heart, and if the heart was naught, the sacrifice was rejected. Verily, God rejects all those sacrifices wherein the heart is not. Prayer without the heart is but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Prayer is only lovely and weighty, as the heart is in it, and no otherwise. It is not the lifting up of the voice, nor the wringing of the hands, nor the beating of the breasts, nor an affected tone, nor studied motions, nor seraphical expressions, but the stirrings of the heart, that God looks at in prayer. God hears no more than the heart speaks. If the heart be dumb, God will certainly be deaf. No prayer takes with God, but that which is the travail of the heart.—*Thomas Brooks.*

*Verse* 146.—"*I cried unto thee.*" The distressed soul expresses itself in strong cries and tears. Of old they cried unto the Lord, and he heard them in their distress. So Israel at the Red Sea. The men of the Reformation thus expressed themselves in earnest prayer, and found relief. Luther at the Diet of Worms, when remanded for another day, spent the long night in the loud utterance of prayer, that he might appear for his Lord before an august earthly assembly. Our reading of the covenanting times will remind us of many instances of the same. We may think of John Welch, going into his garden night after night, in a night covering, and crying to the Lord to grant him Scotland. The expression of prayer, however, is manifold as the frame of the spirit. Intense feeling will beget strong cries in prayer; but prayer that is uttered under realizing views of our gracious God will be mild, and often delivered as it were in whispers. So was Alexander Peden accustomed to pray, as if he had been engaged in calm converse with a friend. . . . . But when the feeling is intense, when wrath lies heavy upon us, when danger is apprehended as near, when the Lord is conceived to be at a distance, or when there is eager desire after immediate attainment—in all these cases there will be the strong cries. Such seems to have been the

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state of the Psalmist's mind when he poured forth the expressive utterance of this part.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 146.—Brief as are the petitions, the whole compass of language could not make them more comprehensive. "*Hear me.*" The soul is in earnest, *the whole heart* is engaged in the "cry." "*Save me*"—includes a sinner's whole need—pardon, acceptance, access, holiness, strength, comfort, heaven,—all in one word—Christ. The way of access *is not indeed mentioned* in these short ejaculations. But *it is always implied* in every moment's approach and address to the throne of grace. "*Hear me*" in the name of my all-prevailing Advocate. "*Save me*" through him, whose name is Jesus the Saviour.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 146.—"*I cried unto thee.*" A crying prayer pierces the depths of heaven. We read not a word that Moses spake, but God was moved by his cry. Exod. xiv. 15. It means not an obstreperous noise, but melting moans of heart. Yet sometimes the sore and pinching necessities and distresses of spirit extort even vocal cries not displeasant to the inclined ears of God. "I cried unto God with my voice," says David, "and he heard me out of his holy hill": Ps. iii. 4. And this encourages to a fresh onset: "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God": Ps. v. 2. "Give ear unto my cry: hold not thy peace at my tears": Ps. xxxix. 12. Another time he makes the cave echo with his cries. "I cried, I cried. Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low."—*Samuel Lee* (1625—1691), *in* "*The Morning Exercises.*"

*Verse* 146.—"*I cried unto thee; save me.*" In our troubles, we must have recourse to God, and sue to him by prayer and supplication for help and deliverance in due time; because he is the author of our trouble. In mercies and afflictions, our business lieth not with men, but God; by humble dealing with him we stop wrath at the fountain-head: he that bindeth us must loose us; he is at the upper end of causes, and whoever be the instruments of our trouble, and how malicious soever, God is the party with whom we are to make our peace; for he hath the absolute disposal of all creatures, and will have us to acknowledge the dominion of his providence and our dependence upon him. In treaties of peace between two warring parties, the address is not made to private soldiers, but to their chief: "The Lord hath taken away," saith Job; "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" Job xxxiv. 29.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 146.—"*Save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.*" The servants of God regard life itself as chiefly desirable on account of the opportunity which it affords for serving God: "*Save me, that I may keep thy testimonies,*" is the prayer of the believer in the day of trouble and conflict. "To me to live," says he, "is Christ, and to die is gain." How unlike is this to the wicked! Their whole desire in the day of trouble is expended on the wish to escape calamity; they have no desire to be delivered from sin, no wish to be conformed to God!—*John Morison.*

*Verse* 146.—"*Save me.*" From my sins, my corruptions, my temptations, all the hindrances that lie in my way, that I may "*keep thy testimonies.*" We must cry for salvation, not that we may have the ease and comfort of it, but that we may have an opportunity of serving God the more cheerfully. —*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 146.—God hears us, that we should hear him.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 147.—"*I prevented the dawning of the morning.*" The manner of speech is to be marked. He saith he prevented the morning watch, thereby declaring that he lived, as it were, in a strife with time, careful that it should not overrun him. He knew that time posts away, and in running by wearieth man to dust and ashes. But David pressed to get before it, by doing some good in it, before that it should spur away from him. And this care which David had of every day, alas, how may it make them ashamed

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who have no care of a whole life! He was afraid to lose a day; they take no thought to lose months and years without doing good in them: yea, having spent the three ages of their life in vanity and licentiousness, scarce will they consecrate their old and decrepit age to the Lord.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 147.—"*I prevented the dawning of the morning,*" etc. Those that make a business of prayer will use great vigilancy and diligence therein. I say, that make a business of prayer; others that use it as a compliment and customary formality, will not be thus affected; they do it as a thing by-the-by, or a work that might well be spared, and do not look upon it as a necessary duty; but if a man's heart be in it, he will be early at work, and follow it close, morning and night: his business is to maintain communion with God, his desires will not let him sleep, and he gets up early to be calling upon God. "But unto thee have I cried, O Lord: and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee." Ps. lxxviii. 13. Thus will good men even break their sleep to give themselves to prayer, and calling upon the name of God. —*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 147.—"*I prevented the dawning of the morning.*" It is a grievous thing if the rays of the rising sun find thee lazy and ashamed in thy bed, and the bright light strike on eyes still weighed down with slumbering sloth. Knowest thou not, O man, that thou owest the daily first-fruits of thy heart and voice to God? Thou hast a daily harvest, a daily revenue. The Lord Jesus remained all night in prayer, not that he needed its help, but putting an example before thee to imitate. He spent the night in prayer for thee, that thou mightest learn how to ask for thyself. Give him again, therefore what he paid for thee.—*Ambrose.*

*Verse* 147.—"*I prevented the dawning of the morning.*" David was a good husband, up early at it: at night he was late at this duty: "At midnight will I rise to give thanks unto thee": verse 62. This surely was his meaning when he said he should dwell in the house of the Lord for ever; he would be ever in the house of prayer. . . . . I wish that when I first open my eyes in the morning, I may then, in soul ejaculatory prayer, open my heart to my God, that at night prayer may make my bed soft, and lay my pillow easy; that in the day-time prayer may perfume my clothes, sweeten my food, oil the wheels of my particular vocation, keep me company upon all occasions, and gild over all my natural, civil, and religious actions. I wish that, after I have poured out my prayer in the name of Christ, according to the will of God, having sowed my seed, I may expect a crop, looking earnestly for the springing of it up, and believing assuredly that I shall reap in time if I faint not.—*George Swinnock.*

*Verse* 147.—"*I prevented the dawning of the morning.*" Early prayers are undisturbed by the agitating cares of life, and resemble the sweet melody of those birds which sing loudest and sweetest when fewest ears are open to listen to them. O my soul, canst thou say that thou hast thus "*prevented the dawning of the morning*" in thy approaches to God? Has the desire of communion with heaven raised thee from thy slumbers, shaken off thy sloth, and carried thee to thy knees?—*John Morison.*

*Verse* 147.—"*And cried.*" Here is a repetition of the same prayer, "*I cried*"; yea, again I cried, and a third time, "I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried." We use to knock at a door thrice, and then depart. Our Lord Jesus "prayed the third time, saying the same words" (Matt. xxvi. 44), "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." So the apostle Paul: "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me": 2 Cor. xii. 8. So, "And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again": 1 Kings xvii. 21. This, it seemeth, was the time in which they expected an answer in weighty cases; and yet I will not confine it to that number; for here we

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are to reiterate our petitions for one and the same thing as often as occasion requireth, till it be granted.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 147.—Poets have delighted to sing of the morning as "Mother of the Dews," "sowing the earth with orient pearl"; and many of the saints upstarting from their beds at the first blush of dawn have found the poetry of nature to be the reality of grace as they have felt the dews of heaven refreshing their spirit. Hence morning exercises have ever been dear to the enlightened, heaven-loving souls, and it has been their rule, never to see the face of man till they have first seen the face of God. The breath of morn redolent of the smell of flowers is incense offered by earth to her Creator, and living men should never let the dead earth excel them; truly living men tuning their hearts for song, like the birds, salute the radiant mercy which reveals itself in the east. The first fresh hour of every morning should be dedicated to the Lord whose mercy gladdens it with golden light. The eye of day openeth its lids, and in so doing opens the eyes of hosts of heaven-protected slumberers; it is fitting that those eyes should first look up to the great Father of Lights, the fount and source of all the good upon which the sunlight gleams. It augurs for us a day of grace when we begin betimes with God; the sanctifying influence of the season spent upon the mount operates upon each succeeding hour. Morning devotion anchors the soul so that it will not very readily drift far away from God during the day; it perfumes the heart so that it smells fragrant with piety until nightfall; it girds up the soul's garments so that it is less apt to stumble, and feeds all its powers so that it is not permitted to faint. The morning is the gate of the day, and should be well guarded with prayer. It is one end of the thread on which the day's actions are strung, and should be well knotted with devotion. If we felt more the majesty of life we should be more careful of its mornings. He who rushes from his bed to his business and waiteth not to worship, is as foolish as though he had not put on his clothes, or cleansed his face, and as unwise as though he dashed into battle without arms or armour. Be it ours to bathe in the softly flowing river of communion with God, before the heat of the wilderness and the burden of the way begin to oppress us.—*C. H. S.*

*Verse* 147.—"*I hoped in thy word.*" Even if there should not be actual enjoyment, at least let us honour God by the spirit of expectancy.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verses* 147, 148.—The student of theology and the minister of the word should begin the day with prayer, and this chiefly to seek from God, that he may rightly understand the word of God, and be able to teach others.—*Solomon Gesner.* Brethren, note this!—*C. H. S.*

*Verses* 147, 148.—See here: 1. That David was an early riser, which perhaps contributed to his eminency. He was none of those that say, "Yet a little sleep." 2. That he began the day with God; the first thing he did in the morning, before he admitted any business, was to pray; when his mind was most fresh and in the best frame. If our first thoughts in the morning be of God, it will help to keep us in his fear all the day long. 3. That his mind was so full of God and the cares and delights of his religion, that a little sleep served his turn, even in "*the nightwatches,*" when he awaked from his first sleep, he would rather meditate and pray, than turn him and go to sleep again. He esteemed the words of God's mouth more than his necessary repose, which we can as ill want as our food: Job xxiii. 12. 4. That he would redeem time for religious exercises; he was full of business all day, but that will excuse no man from secret devotion; it is better to take time from sleep, as David did, than not find time for prayer. And this is our comfort when we pray in the night, that we can never come unseasonably to the throne of grace, if we may have access to it at all hours. Baal may be asleep, but Israel's God never slumbers, nor are there any hours in which he may not be spoken with.—*Matthew Henry.*

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*Verse* 148.—"*Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.*" You will all admit that this is the language of an ardent, earnest, and painstaking student. David represents himself as "rising early, and late taking rest," on purpose that he might employ himself in the study of God's word. "He *meditates* in this word," the expression implying close and patient thought; as if there were much in the word which was not to be detected by a cursory glance, and which required the strictest application both of the head and the heart.

The Bible is a book in which we may continually meditate, and yet not exhaust its contents. When David expressed himself in the language of our text, Holy Writ—the word of God—was of course a far smaller volume than it now is, though, even now, the Bible is far from a large book. Yet David could not, so to speak, get to the end of the book. He might have been studying the book for years,—nay, we are sure that he had been,—and yet, as though he were just entering on a new course of reading, with volume upon volume to peruse, he must rise before day to prosecute the study. "*Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.*"

The same remark may be made upon precepts which enjoin continued study of the Bible. Is there material for that study? Unless there be, the precepts will become out of place; the Scriptural student will have exhausted the Scriptures; and what is he to do then? He can no longer obey the precepts, and the precepts will prove that they cannot have been made for perpetuity—for the men of all ages and all conditions. . . . . .

Here is a servant of God, who, from his youth upward, has been diligent in the study of the Bible. Year after year he has devoted to that study, and yet the Bible is but a single volume, and that not a large volume. "Well, then," you might be inclined to say, "the study must surely by this time have exhausted the book! There can be nothing new for him to bring out; nothing which he has not investigated and fathomed." Ah, how you mistake the Bible! What a much larger book it must be than it seems! In place of having exhausted it, the royal student speaks as though there were more work before him than he knew how to compass. "*Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.*"—*Henry Melvill.*

*Verse* 148.—"*Mine eyes prevent the night watches.*" The Hebrew word means *a watch*—a part of the night, so called from military watches, or a dividing of the night to keep guard. The idea of the Psalmist here is, that he *anticipated* these regular divisions of the night in order that he might engage in devotion. Instead of waiting for their return, he arose for prayer before they recurred; so much did his heart delight in the service of God. The language would seem to be that of one who was accustomed to pray in these successive "*watches*" of the night; the early, the middle, and the dawn. This may illustrate what occurs in the life of all who love God. They will have regular seasons of devotion, but they will often *anticipate* those seasons. They will be in a state of mind which prompts them to pray; when nothing will meet their state of mind *but* prayer; and when they cannot wait for the regular and ordinary season of devotion; like a hungry man, who cannot wait for the usual and regular hour of his meals. The meaning of the phrase, "*Mine eyes* prevent," is that he awoke before the usual time for devotion.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 148.—"*Mine eyes prevent the night watches,*" etc. His former purpose is yet continued, declaring his indefatigable perseverance in prayer. Oh, that we could learn of him to use our time well! At evening he lay down with prayers and tears; at midnight he rose to give thanks; he got up before the morning light to call upon the Lord. This is to imitate the life of angels, who ever are delighted to behold the face of God, singing alway a new song without wearying. This is to begin our heaven upon earth: Oh, that we could alway remember it!—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 148.—"*Night watches.*" The Jews, like the Greeks and Romans,

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divided the night into military watches instead of hours, each watch representing the period for which sentinels or pickets remained on duty. The proper Jewish reckoning recognized only three such watches, entitled the first, or "beginning of the watches" (Lam. ii. 19), "the middle watch" (Judg. vii. 19), and "the morning watch" (Exod. xiv. 24; 1 Sam. xi. 11). These would last respectively from sunset to 10 p.m.; from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.; and from 2 a.m. to sunrise. It has been contended by Lightfoot that the Jews really reckoned four watches, three only of which were in the dead of the night, the fourth being in the morning. This, however, is rendered improbable by the use of the term "middle," and is opposed to Rabbinical authority. Subsequently to the establishment of Roman supremacy, the number of watches was increased to four, which were described either according to their numerical order, as in the case of the "fourth watch" (Matt. xiv. 25), or by the terms "even, midnight, cock-crowing, and morning" (Mark xiii. 35). These terminated respectively at 9 p.m., midnight, 3 a.m., and 6 a.m. Conformably to this, the guard of soldiers was divided into four relays (Acts xii. 4), showing that the Roman régime was followed in Herod's army. Watchmen appear to have patrolled the streets of the Jewish towns (Cant. iii. 3; v. 7; Ps. cxxvii. 1, where for "maketh" we should substitute "watcheth"; Ps. cxxx. 6).—*William Latham Bevan, in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, 1863.

*Verse* 149.—"*Quicken me.*" By *quickening* some understand restitution to happiness; for a calamitous man is as one dead and buried under deep and heavy troubles, and his recovery is a life from the dead, or a reviving from the grave: so quickening seemeth to be taken in Psalm lxxi. 20: "Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth."

Others understand by *quickening*, the renewing and increasing in him the vigour of his spiritual life. That he beggeth that God would revive, increase, and preserve that life, which he had already given, that it might be perfected and consummated in glory. That he might be ever ready to bring forth the habits of grace into acts.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 149.—"*Judgment*" is sometimes taken for the execution of God's threatenings against transgressors; and this David declares: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant": Ps. cxliii. 2. Sometime it is taken for the performance of his promises, according to his word; and this David desires, as in this verse.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 150.—"*They are far from thy law.*" Truly it should greatly comfort all the godly, to remember that such as are their enemies are God's enemies also. Since they are far from the obedience of God's law, what marvel they be also far from the duty of love which they owe us? It may content us to want that comfort in men which otherwise we might and would have, when we consider that God wants his glory in them. Let this sustain us when we see that godless men are enemies unto us.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 150.—If we can get a carnal pillow and bolster under our heads, we sleep and dream many a golden dream of ease and safety. Now, God, who is jealous of our trust, will not let us alone, and therefore will put us upon sharp trials. It is not faith, but sense, we live upon before; that is faith, if we can depend upon God when "they draw near that follow after mischief:" "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about": Ps. iii. 6. A danger at a distance is but imagined, it worketh otherwise when it is at hand. Christ himself had other thoughts of approaching danger than danger at a distance: "Now is my soul troubled": John xii. 27. This vessel of pure water was troubled, though he discovered no dross.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verses* 150, 151.—Our spiritual enemies, like David's earthly persecutors,

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are ever present and active. The devouring "lion," or the insinuating "serpent" is "*nigh to follow after mischief*"; and so much the more dangerous, as his approaches are invisible. Nigh also is a tempting, ensnaring world; and nearer still, a lurking world of sin within, separating us from communion with our God. But in turning habitually and immediately to our stronghold, we can enjoy the confidence—"*Thou art near, O Lord.*" Though "the High and Lofty One, whose name is Holy"—though the just and terrible God, yet art thou made nigh to thy people, and they to thee, "by the blood of the cross." And thou dost manifest thy presence to them in "the Son of thy love."—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verses* 150, 151.—They are "*nigh*" to persecute and destroy me; thou art *nigh*, O Lord, to help me.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

*Verses* 150, 151.—"*They draw nigh.*" . . . "*Thou art near.*" From the meditation of his enemies' malice he returns again to the meditation of God's mercy; and so it is expedient for us to do, lest the number and greatness and maliciousness of our enemies make us to faint when we look unto them. It is good that we should cast our eyes upward to the Lord; then shall we see that they are not so near to hurt us as the Lord our God is near to help us; and that there is no evil in them which we have cause to fear, but we shall find in our God a contrary good sufficient to preserve us. Otherwise we could not endure, if when Satan and his instruments come near to pursue us, the Lord were not near to protect us.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 151.—"*Thou art near, O* LORD."—How sweetly and how often has this thought been brought home to some forsaken and forgotten one! "When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up," was the comfort of one in that deep affliction. And in the first outbreaking of the heart, how sweetly has the conviction come, like some whisper of peace, "I am with thee!" And I have no doubt that many and many a time in those hours of solitary prayer, when before the dawning of the morning, and before the night watches, or the Psalmist arose at midnight to commune with God, when no voice broke on the stillness, and every sound was hushed save the beating of his own heart, then had David heard the whisper of God's Holy Spirit, "*I am near,*" "Fear not, I am with thee."—*Barton Bouchier.*

*Verse* 151.—"*Thou art near, O* LORD." This was *once* man's greatest blessing, and source of sweetest consolation. It was the fairest flower which grew in Paradise; but sin withered it, the flower faded, it drooped, it died. Gen. iii. 8; iv. 16. It must be so *once more;* the flower must once again bloom, again it must revive; even upon earth must it blossom, or in heaven it will never put forth its fragrance.

"*Thou art near.*" Even in thy works of *creation*, in the sun in his glory, in the moon in her softness, gleaming in the firmament, I see thee. In the balm of this fragrant air, in the light of this cheerful day, in the redolence of these shrubs around me, whose flowery tops, as they drink in the soft and gentle shower as it falls, seem to breathe forth a fresh perfume in gratitude to him who sends it. In the melody of these birds which fill the air with their songs, thou, O Lord, art near. I perceive thee not with my bodily eyes, although by these I discern thy workmanship, and with the eye of the mind behold thee in thy works, *a present God.*

"*Thou art near.*" Even in the book of thy providence, dark and mysterious though it be, I see thee. There do I read thy *wisdom*, as developed in thy world, thy church, thy saints, thy servant before thee; the wisdom that guides, the wisdom that guards, the wisdom that bestows, the wisdom that encourages, the wisdom that corrects, that kills and makes alive. There do I read thy *power*, thy *justice*, thy *faithfulness*, thy *holiness*, thy *love.*

But it is in thy *Son*, thy beloved Son, that I most clearly and distinctly see thee as near. If in creation, if in providence, thou art near, in him thou

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art very near, O Lord. Near as a sin-forgiving God. Rom. viii. 1. Near as a promise-keeping God. 2 Cor. i. 20. Near as a prayer-hearing God. John xvi. 20; Ps. cxlv. 18. Near as a covenant-keeping God. Heb. viii. 10. Near as a gracious, tender Father. John xx. 17.

"*Thou art near, O* LORD." O that I might live in the constant sense of thy nearness to me! How often, far too often, alas, do I seem quite to forget it!

Art thou near? Then may I realizingly remember, that *by the blood of thy dear Son*, and by that alone, have I been brought nigh (Eph. ii. 13); that it required nothing less than the stoop of Deity, and the sufferings and death of his perfect humanity, to remove those hindrances which interposed between a holy God and an unholy creature. Oh, to walk before thee with a grateful spirit, and with a broken, contrite heart!

Art thou near? Then may I walk as before thee, *as seeing thee*, in holy fear, in filial love, in simple faith, in child-like confidence. Gen. xvii. 1. When *sin* would tempt and solicit indulgence, when the *world* presents some new allurement, when *Satan* would take advantage of constitution, society, circumstances, oh, that I may ever remember "*Thou art near.*"

If my dearest comforts droop and die, if friends are cool, if the bonds once the firmest, the closest, the tenderest, are torn asunder and dissevered, yet may I still remember, "*Thou* art near, O Lord," and not afar off. And when the solemn moment shall come, when heart and flesh shall fail, when all earthly things are seen with a dying eye, when I hear thee say, "Thou must die, and not live," then, oh then may I remember, with all the composedness of faith, and all the liveliness of hope, and all the ardour of love, "*Thou art near, O Lord.*"—*James Harington Evans*, 1785—1849.

*Verse* 151.—"*All thy commandments are truth.*" His meaning is,—Albeit, O Lord, the evil will of wicked men follows me because I follow thee; yet I know thy commandments are true, and that it is not possible that thou canst desert or fail thy servants who stand to the maintenance of thy word. Then, ye see, David's comfort in trouble was not in any presumptuous conceit of his own wisdom or strength, but in the truth of God's promises, which he was persuaded could not fail him. And here also he makes a secret opposition between the word of the Lord and the word of his enemies. Sometimes men command, but without reason; sometimes they threaten, but without effect. Herod's commanding, Rabshakeh's railing, Jezebel's proud boasting against Elijah, may prove this. But as to the Lord our God he is alway better than his word, and his servants shall find more in his performance hereafter than now they can perceive in his promise: like as his enemies should find more weight in his judgments than now they can apprehend in his threatenings.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 152.—This portion of our psalm endeth with the triumph of faith over all dangers and temptations. "*Concerning thy testimonies*," the revelations of thy will, thy counsels for the salvation of thy servants, "*I have known of old*," by faith, and by my own experience, as well as that of others, "*that thou hast founded them for ever*"; they are unalterable and everlasting as the attributes of their great Author, and can never fail those who rely upon them, in time or in eternity.—*George Horne.*

*Verse* 152.—"*I have known of old.*" It was not a late persuasion, or a thing that he was now to learn; he always knew it since he knew anything of God, that God had owned his word as the constant rule of his proceedings with creatures, in that God had so often made good his word to him, not only by present and late, but by old and ancient experiences. Well, then, David's persuasion of the truth and unchangeableness of the word was not a sudden humour, or a present fit, or a persuasion of a few days' standing; but he was confirmed in it by long experience. One or two experiences had been no trial of the truth of the word, they might

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seem but a good hit; but his word ever proveth true, not once or twice, but always; what we say "of old," the Septuagint reads κατ' αρχὰς, "from the beginnings"; that is, either—1. From my tender years. Timothy knew the Scriptures from a child (2 Tim. iii. 15); so David very young was acquainted with God and his truth. 2. Or, from the first time that he began to be serious, or to mind the word in good earnest, or to be a student either in God's word or works, by comparing providences and promises, he found concerning his testimonies that "*God had founded them for ever.*" 3. Lastly, "*of old*" may be what I have heard of all foregoing ages, their experience as well as mine: "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded:" Ps. xxii. 4, 5.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 152.—Let us mark this eternal basis of "the testimonies of God." The whole plan of redemption was emphatically "*founded for ever*": the Saviour was "*foreordained before the foundation of the world.*" The people of God were "*chosen in Christ before the world began!*" The great Author "*declares the end from the beginning,*" and thus clears his dispensations from any charge of mutability or contingency. Every event in the church is fixed, permitted, and provided for—not in the passing moment of time, but in the counsels of eternity. When, therefore, the testimonies set forth God's faithful engagements with his people of old, the recollection that they are "*founded for ever*" gives us a present and unchangeable interest in them. And when we see that they are grounded upon the oath and promise of God—the two "immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie"—we may truly "have strong consolation" in venturing every hope for eternity upon this rock; nor need we be dismayed to see all our earthly dependencies—"the world, and the lust, and the fashion of it—passing away" before us. —*Charles Bridges.*



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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 153 TO 160.

CONSIDER mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.

154 Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

155 Salvation *is* far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

156 Great *are* thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.

157 Many *are* my persecutors and mine enemies; *yet* do I not decline from thy testimonies.

158 I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

159 Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.

160 Thy word *is* true *from* the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments *endureth* for ever.

In this section the Psalmist seems to draw still nearer to God in prayer, and to state his case and to invoke the divine help with more of boldness and expectation. It is a pleading passage, and the key-word of it is, "Consider." With much boldness he pleads his intimate union with the Lord's cause as a reason why he should be aided. The special aid that he seeks is personal *quickening*, for which he cries to the Lord again and again.

153. "*Consider mine affliction, and deliver me.*" The writer has a good case, though it be a grievous one, and he is ready, yea anxious, to submit it to the divine arbitration. His matters are right, and he is ready to lay them before the supreme court. His manner is that of one who feels safe at the throne. Yet there is no impatience: he does not ask for hasty action, but for consideration. In effect he cries—"Look into my grief, and see whether I do not need to be delivered. From my sorrowful condition judge as to the proper method and time for my rescue." The Psalmist desires two things, and these two things blended: first, a full consideration of his sorrow; secondly, deliverance; and, then, that this deliverance should come with a consideration of his affliction. It should be the desire of every gracious man who is in adversity that the Lord should look upon his need, and relieve it in such a way as shall be most for the divine glory, and for his own benefit. The words, "mine affliction," are picturesque; they seem to portion off a special spot of woe as the writer's own inheritance: he possesses it as no one else had ever done, and he begs the Lord to have that special spot under his eye: even as a husbandman looking over all his fields may yet take double care of a certain selected plot. His prayer is eminently practical, for he seeks to be delivered; that is, brought out of the trouble and preserved from sustaining any serious damage by it. For God to consider is to act in due season: men consider and do nothing; but such is never the case with our God. "*For I do not forget thy law.*" His affliction was not sufficient, with all its bitterness, to drive out of his mind the memory of God's law; nor could it lead him to act contrary to the divine command. He forgot prosperity, but he did not forget obedience. This is a good plea when it can be honestly urged. If we are kept faithful to God's law we may be sure that God will remain faithful to his promise. If we do not forget his law the Lord will not forget us. He will not long leave that man in trouble whose only fear in trouble is lest he should leave the way of right.

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154. "*Plead my cause, and deliver me.*" In the last verse he had prayed, "Deliver me," and here he specifies one method in which that deliverance might be vouchsafed, namely, by the advocacy of his cause. In providence the Lord has many ways of clearing the slandered of the accusations brought against them. He can make it manifest to all that they have been belied, and in this way he can practically plead their cause. He can, moreover, raise up friends for the godly who will leave no stone unturned till their characters are cleared; or he can smite their enemies with such fearfulness of heart that they will be forced to confess their falsehood, and thus the righteous will be delivered without the striking of a blow. Alexander reads it, "Strive my strife, and redeem me"—that is, stand in my stead, bear my burden, fight my fight, pay my price, and bring me out to liberty. When we feel ourselves dumb before the foe, here is a prayer made to our hand. What a comfort that if we sin we have an advocate, and if we do *not* sin the same pleader is engaged on our side. "*Quicken me.*" We had this prayer in the last section, and we shall have it again and again in this. It is a desire which cannot be too often felt and expressed. As the soul is the centre of everything, so to be quickened is the central blessing. It means more love, more grace, more faith more courage, more strength, and if we get these we can hold up our heads before our adversaries. God alone can give this quickening; but to the Lord and giver of life the work is easy enough, and he delights to perform it. "*According to thy word.*" David had found such a blessing among the promised things, or at least he perceived that it was according to the general tenor of God's word that tried believers should be quickened and brought up again from the dust of the earth; therefore he pleads the word, and desires the Lord to act to him according to the usual run of that word. What a mighty plea is this—"according to thy word." No gun in all our arsenals can match it.

155. "*Salvation is far from the wicked.*" By their perseverance in evil they have almost put themselves out of the pale of hope. They talk about being saved, but they cannot have known anything of it or they would not remain wicked. Every step they have taken in the path of evil has removed them further from the kingdom of grace: they go from one degree of hardness to another till their hearts become as stone. When they fall into trouble it will be irremediable. Yet they talk big, as if they either needed no salvation or could save themselves whenever their fancy turned that way. "*For they seek not thy statutes.*" They do not endeavour to be obedient, but quite the reverse; they seek themselves, they seek evil, and therefore they never find the way of peace and righteousness. When men have broken the statutes of the Lord their wisest course is by repentance to seek forgiveness, and by faith to seek salvation: then salvation is near them, so near them that they shall not miss it; but when the wicked continue to seek after mischief, salvation is set further and further from them. Salvation and God's statutes go together: those who are saved by the King of grace love the statutes of the King of glory.

156. This verse is exceedingly like verse one hundred and forty-nine, and yet it is no vain repetition. There is such a difference in the main idea that the one verse stands out distinct from the other. In the first case he mentions his prayer, but leaves the method of its accomplishment with the wisdom or judgment of God; while here he pleads no prayer of his own, but simply the mercies of the Lord, and begs to be quickened by judgments rather than to be left to spiritual lethargy. We may take it for granted that an inspired author is never so short of thought as to be obliged to repeat himself: where we think we have the same idea in this psalm we are misled by our neglect of careful study. Each verse is a distinct pearl. Each blade of grass in this field has its own drop of heavenly dew. "*Great are thy tender mercies, O* LORD." Here the Psalmist pleads the largeness of God's mercy, the immensity of his tender love; yea, he speaks of *mercies*—mercies many,

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mercies tender, mercies great; and with the glorious Jehovah he makes this a plea for his one leading prayer, the prayer for quickening. Quickening is a great and tender mercy; and it is many mercies in one. Shall one so greatly good permit his servant to die? Will not one so tender breathe new life into him? "*Quicken me according to thy judgments.*" A measure of awakening comes with the judgments of God; they are startling and arousing; and hence the believer's quickening thereby. David would have every severe stroke sanctified to his benefit, as well as every tender mercy. The first clause of this verse may run, "Many," or, "manifold are thy compassions, O Jehovah." This he remembers in connection with the "many persecutors" of whom he will speak in the next verse. By all these many mercies he pleads for enlivening grace, and thus he has many strings to his bow. We shall never be short of arguments if we draw them from God himself, and urge both his mercies and his judgments as reasons for our quickening.

157. "*Many are my persecutors and mine enemies.*" Those who actually assail me, or who secretly abhor me, are many. He sets this over against the many tender mercies of God. It seems a strange thing that a truly godly man, as David was, should have many enemies; but it is inevitable. The disciple cannot be loved where his Master is hated. The seed of the serpent must oppose the seed of the woman: it is their nature. "*Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.*" He did not deviate from the truth of God, but proceeded in the straight way, however many adversaries might endeavour to block up his path. Some men have been led astray by one enemy, but here is a saint who held on his way in the teeth of many persecutors. There is enough in the testimonies of God to recompense us for pushing forward against all the hosts that may combine against us. So long as they cannot drive or draw us into a spiritual decline our foes have done us no great harm, and they have accomplished nothing by their malice. If we do not decline they are defeated. If they cannot make us sin they have missed their mark. Faithfulness to the truth is victory over our enemies.

158. "*I beheld the transgressors.*" I saw the traitors; I understood their character, their object, their way, and their end. I could not help seeing them, for they pushed themselves into my way. As I was obliged to see them I fixed my eyes on them, to learn what I could from them. "*And was grieved.*" I was sorry to see such sinners. I was sick of them, disgusted with them, I could not endure them. I found no pleasure in them, they were a sad sight to me, however fine their clothing or witty their chattering. Even when they were most mirthful a sight of them made my heart heavy; I could not tolerate either them or their doings. "*Because they kept not thy word.*" My grief was occasioned more by their sin against God than by their enmity against myself. I could bear their evil treatment of my words, but not their neglect of thy word. Thy word is so precious to me that those who will not keep it move me to indignation; I cannot keep the company of those who keep not God's word. That they should have no love for me is a trifle; but to despise the teaching of the Lord is abominable.

159. "*Consider,*" or see, "*how I love thy precepts.*" A second time he asks for consideration. As he said before, "Consider mine affliction," so now he says, "Consider mine affection." He loved the precepts of God—loved them unspeakably—loved them so as to be grieved with those who did not love them. This is a sure test: many there are who have a warm side towards the promises, but as for the precepts, they cannot endure them. The Psalmist so loved everything that was good and excellent that he loved all God had commanded. The precepts are all of them wise and holy, therefore the man of God loved them extremely, loved to know them, to think of them, to proclaim them, and principally to practise them. He asked the Lord to remember and consider this, not upon the ground of merit, but that it should serve

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as an answer to the slanderous accusations which at this time were the great sting of his sorrow. "*Quicken me, O* LORD, *according to thy lovingkindness.*" Here he comes back to his former prayer, "Quicken me" (v. 154), "quicken me" (v. 156). "Quicken me." He prays again the third time, using the same words. We may understand that David felt like one who was half stunned with the assaults of his foes, ready to faint under their incessant malice. What he wanted was revival, restoration, renewal; therefore he pleaded for more life. O thou who didst quicken me when I was dead, quicken me again that I may not return to the dead! Quicken me that I may outlive the blows of my enemies, the faintness of my faith, and the swooning of my sorrow. This time he does not say, "Quicken me according to thy judgments," but, "Quicken me, O Lord, according to thy lovingkindness." This is the great gun which he brings up last to the conflict: it is his ultimate argument, if this succeed not he must fail. He has long been knocking at mercy's gate, and with this plea he strikes his heaviest blow. When he had fallen into great sin this was his plea, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness," and now that he is in great trouble he flies to the same effectual reasoning. Because God is love he will give us life; because he is kind he will again kindle the heavenly flame within us.

160. The sweet singer finishes up this section in the same way as the last by dwelling upon the sureness of the truth of God. It will be well for the reader to note the likeness between verses 144, 152, and the present one. "*Thy word is true.*" Whatever the transgressors may say, God is true, and his word is true. The ungodly are false, but God's word is true. They charge us with being false, but our solace is that God's true word will clear us. "*From the beginning.*" God's word has been true from the first moment in which it was spoken, true throughout the whole of history, true to us from the instant in which we believed it, ay, true to us before we were true to it. Some read it, "Thy word is true from the head;" true as a whole, true from top to bottom. Experience had taught David this lesson, and experience is teaching us the same. The Scriptures are as true in Genesis as in Revelation, and the five books of Moses are as inspired as the four Gospels. "*And every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.*" That which thou hast decided remains irreversible in every case. Against the decisions of the Lord no writ of error can be demanded, neither will there ever be a repealing of any of the acts of his sovereignty. There is not one single mistake either in the word of God or in the providential dealings of God. Neither in the book of revelation nor of providence will there be any need to put a single note of *errata*. The Lord has nothing to regret or to retract, nothing to amend or to reverse. All God's judgments, decrees, commands, and purposes are righteous, and as righteous things are lasting things, every one of them will outlive the stars. "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." God's justice endureth for ever. This is a cheering thought, but there is a much sweeter one, which of old was the song of the priests in the temple; let it be ours, "His mercy endureth for ever."

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## NOTES ON VERSES 153 TO 160.

*Verse* 153.—"*Consider mine affliction, and deliver me.*" God looks upon or considers man in various ways, and for different ends. To give him light; for "as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth" (John ix. 1). To convert him; "He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me" (Matt. ix. 9). To restore him; "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Luke xxii. 61). To deliver him; "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt" (Exod. iii. 7). To advance him; "He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden" (Luke i. 48): and to reward him; "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering" (Gen. iv. 4).—*Hugh de St. Victor* (1098—1141), *in Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 153.—"*Consider mine affliction, and deliver me.*" We must pray that God will help and deliver us, not after the device of our own brains, but after such wise as seemeth best unto his tender wisdom, or else that he will mitigate our pain, that our weakness may not utterly faint. Like as a sick person, although he doubt nothing of the faithfulness and tenderness of his physician, yet, for all that, desireth him to handle his wound as tenderly as possible, even so may we call upon God, that, if it be not against his honour and glory, he will vouchsafe to give some mitigation of the pain.—*Otto Wermuellerus.*

*Verse* 153.—"*Consider mine affliction.*" These prayers of David are penned with such heavenly wisdom that they are convenient for the state of the whole church, and every member thereof. The church is the bush that burneth with fire, but cannot be consumed; every member thereof beareth a part of the cross of Christ; they are never without some affliction, for which they have need to pray with David, "*Behold mine affliction.*"

We know that in afflictions it is some comfort to us to have our crosses known to those of whom we are assured that they love us: it mitigates our dolour when they mourn with us, albeit they be not able to help us. But the Christian hath a more solid comfort; to wit, that in all his troubles the Lord beholds him; like a king, rejoicing to see his own servant wrestle with the enemy. He looks on with a merciful eye, pitying the infirmity of his own, when he sees it; and with a powerful hand ready to help them. But because many a time the cloud of our corruption cometh between the Lord and us, and lets us not see his helping hand, nor his loving face looking upon us, we have need to pray at such times with David, "*Behold mine affliction.*"—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 154.—"*Plead my cause, and deliver me,*" etc. Albeit the godly under persecution have a good cause, yet they cannot plead it except God the Redeemer show himself as Advocate for them; therefore prayeth the Psalmist, "*Plead my cause.*"

When God the Redeemer pleadeth a man's cause, he doth it to purpose and effectually: "*Plead my cause, and deliver me.*"

Except the Lord's clients shall find new influence from God from time to time in their troubles, they are but as dead men in their exercise; for, "*Quicken me*" importeth this.

Till we find lively encouragement given to us in trouble we must adhere to the word of promise: "*Quicken me according to thy word.*"

What the believer hath need of, that God hath not only a will to supply, but also an office to attend it, and power to effectuate it, as here he hath the office of an Advocate and of a powerful Redeemer also, wherein the believer may confidently give him daily employment, as he needeth: "*Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.*"—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 154.—"*Plead my cause, and deliver me,*" etc. He now supposes himself to be arraigned before the tribunal of men, as he certainly was in

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their general charges against him; arraigned, too, in his helplessness, without a name, without state; in such way as one disowned would be arraigned. He prays the Lord to come in and plead his cause; so should he be redeemed; for this is the import of the original. As it were, he regards himself as one sold to corrupt judges, or at all events, as one that has lost his standing in society in the estimation of men. But if the Lord will come, and maintain the cause of his servant, his servant shall be redeemed indeed. There is good confidence in this prayer; the man of God is acquainted with the way of the Lord, and he makes his believing application. O how much do we need to know the Lord's righteous character in our seasons of great distress! Now the Lord pleads the cause of his own by the power of the truth; he pleads it also in his providences of divers kinds; he acts upon the hearts, and the hopes, and the fears of men; and in many wondrous ways he pleads his people's cause. He redeems his saints from all evil; and if not together from all evil in this world, certainly from all evil as concerns the world to come.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 154.—"*Plead my cause, and deliver me,*" etc. In this verse are three requests, and all backed with one and the same argument. In the first, he intimateth the right of his cause, and that he was unjustly vexed by wicked men; therefore, as burdened with their calumnies, he desireth God to undertake his defence: "*Plead my cause.*" In the second, he representeth the misery and helplessness of his condition; therefore, as oppressed by violence, he saith, "*Deliver me;*" or, as the words will bear, Redeem me. In the third, his own weakness, and readiness to faint under this burden; therefore he saith. "*Quicken me.*"

Or, in short, with respect to the injustice of his adversaries, "*Plead my cause;*" with respect to the misery of his own condition, "*Deliver me;*" with respect to the weakness and imbecility of his own heart, "*Quicken me.*" . . .

The reason and ground of asking, "*According to thy word.*" This last clause must be applied to all the branches of the prayer: "Plead my cause," "according to thy word;" "deliver me," "according to thy word;" "quicken me," "according to thy word:" for God in his word engageth for all: to be advocate, Redeemer, and fountain of life. The word that David buildeth upon was found either in the general promises made to them that kept the law, or in some particular promise made to himself by the prophets of that time.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 154.—"*Plead my cause, and deliver me.*" A wicked woman once brought against Dr. Payson an accusation, under circumstances which seemed to render it impossible that he should escape. She was in the same packet, in which, many months before, he had gone to Boston. For a time, it seemed almost certain that his character would be ruined. He was cut off from all resource except the throne of grace. He felt that his only hope was in God; and to him he addressed his fervent prayer. He was heard by the Defender of the innocent. A "compunctious visiting" induced the wretched woman to confess that the whole was a malicious slander.—*From Asa Cummings' Memoir of Edward Payson.*

*Verse* 154.—"*Plead my cause.*" I do not know that David meant, by calling upon God to plead his cause, anything more than that he should vindicate his innocence, and make it manifest to all, by delivering him out of the hand of all his enemies; but whether he had an ulterior reference or no, the word powerfully and sweetly recalls to every Christian heart him who was indeed to be the Advocate for poor sinners, even Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins.—*Barton Bouchier.*

*Verse* 154.—"*Plead my cause.*" The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of God. Which made David here pray to God that *he* would *plead his cause*, and be his Advocate against all their policies. He trusted not to the equity of his own cause, but to the Lord. From whence we gather, that the cause why our oppressors prevail oft

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against us is, because we trust too much in our own wits, and lean too much upon our own inventions; opposing subtilty to subtilty, one evil device to another, matching and maintaining policy by policy, and not committing our cause to God.—*Abraham Wright.*

*Verse* 154.—"*Deliver.*" Not as in verse 153, but a word meaning to *redeem*, or to save by avenging. The corresponding participle is rendered redeemer, avenger, revenger, kinsman, near kinsman, next kinsman.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 154.—"*Quicken me.*" Here, again, we are called to consider the bearing of the pious mind. Ever and anon, the great desire of the man of God is to advance in the divine life. He makes spiritual gain of everything. He seeks his goodly pearls out of strange conditions; the reason is, his heart is in these things. Deliverance from temporal evil, deliverance from spiritual evil, both were sought; but along with these, ever does the man of God take up the prayer to be quickened. Certainly we may understand him as seeking life. Such is the import of the phraseology; but in a man like David, the life he seeks must be the highest. He desires spiritual life above all things; he wants to get more into a blessed assimilation to God, that so he may enjoy the highest good. So pants the heaven-born soul. . . . Give the believer this, and this will set him above all the ills of life. And this and all good had been promised in the word. So he prays, "*Quicken me according to thy word.*" He goes upon the word for everything; he cannot be self-deceived there. Judge of yourselves, my brethren, by your spiritual aspirations. Nothing less will prove you to be of the Lord's redeemed.—*John Stephen.*

*Verses* 154, 156, 159.—"*Quicken me.*" Pray to be *quickened*, as the Psalmist often does, and look unto Jesus, who is a quickening spirit: 1 Cor. xv. 45. "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." As he has given you life, so he is ready to give it more and more abundantly; this will make you to live to him, and to be unweariedly active for him.—*Nathanael Vincent, in "A Present for such as have been Sick and Recovered,"* 1693.

*Verse* 155.—"*Salvation is far from the wicked.*" The Lord is almighty to pardon; but he will not use it for thee an impenitent sinner. Thou hast not a friend on the bench, not an attribute in all God's name will speak for thee. Mercy itself will sit and vote with the rest of its fellow-attributes for thy damnation. God is able to save and help in a time of need, but upon what acquaintance is it that thou art so bold with God, as to expect his saving arm to be stretched forth for thee? Though a man rise at midnight to let in a child that cries and knocks at his door, yet he will not take so much pains for a dog that lies howling there. This presents thy condition, sinner, sad enough, yet this is to tell thy story fairest; for that almighty power of God which is engaged for the believer's salvation, is as deeply obliged to bring thee to thy execution and damnation. What greater tie than an oath? God himself is under an oath to be the destruction of every impenitent soul. That oath which God sware in his wrath against the unbelieving Israelites, that they should not enter into his rest, concerns every unbeliever to the end of the world. In the name of God consider, were it but the oath of a man, or a company of men that, like those in the Acts, should swear to be the death of such an one, and thou wert the man, would it not fill thee with fear and trembling, night and day, and take away the quiet of thy life, till they were made thy friends? What then are their pillows stuffed with, who can sleep so soundly without any horror or amazement, though they be told that the almighty God is under an oath of damning them body and soul, without timely repentance?—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse* 155.—"*Salvation*"! What music is there in that word, music that never tires, but is always new, that always rouses yet always rests us! It

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holds in itself all that our hearts would say. It is sweet vigour to us in the morning, and in the evening it is contented peace. It is a song that is always singing itself deep down in the delighted soul. Angelic ears are ravished by it up in heaven; and our Eternal Father himself listens to it with adorable complacency. It is sweet even to him out of whose mind is the music of a thousand worlds. To be saved! What is it to be saved in the fullest and utmost meaning? Who can tell? Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. It is a rescue, and from such a shipwreck! It is a rest, and in such an unimaginable home! It is to lie down for ever in the bosom of God, in an endless rapture of insatiable contentment.—*Frederick William Faber*, 1853.

*Verses* 155, 156.—"*Salvation is far from the wicked.*" "*Great are thy tender mercies, O* LORD." When the godly do think and speak of the damnable condition of the wicked, they should not be senseless of their own ill deserving, nor of God's grace which hath made the difference between the wicked and them.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 156.—"*Great are thy tender mercies, O* LORD." Two epithets he ascribes to God's mercies; first, he calls them "*great*," and then he calls them "*tender*" mercies. They are great in many respects: for continuance, they endure for ever; for largeness, they reach unto the heavens, and are higher than they; yea, they are above all the works of God. And this is for the comfort of poor sinners, whose sins are many and great: let them not despair; his mercies are greater and more; for since they are greater than all his works, how much more greater than thou and all thy sinful works! . . . . . The other epithet he gives them is, that they are "*tender*" mercies; because the Lord is easy to be entreated; for he is slow unto wrath, but ready to show mercy. S. James saith that the wisdom which is from above is "gentle, peaceable, easy to be entreated." If his grace in his children make them gentle and easy to be entreated, what shall we think of himself? Since he will have such pity in us poor creatures, that seventy times seven times in the day he will have us to forgive the offences of our brethren; Oh, what pity and compassion abound in himself! Thus we see our comfort is increased; that as his mercies are great, so are they tender; easily obtained, where they are earnestly craved.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 156.—The Psalmist, when speaking of the wretched condition of "*the wicked*," is naturally led to adore the mercies of the Lord which had "made him to differ." For indeed to this source alone must we trace the distinction between us and them.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 157.—"*Persecutors.*" A participle from the verb rendered *pursue, chase.* "*Enemies*," as in verse 139, the authors of my distress. Until men are hunted and hounded by many enemies, who for the time have power, and are withal fierce and to some extent unscrupulous, they can have but a faint conception of the anguish of the prophet when he experienced the evils noted in this verse. Yet they did not move him from his constancy and integrity.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 158.—"*I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved.*" Celerinus in Cyprian's Epistles, acquaints a friend with his great grief for the apostacy of a woman through fear of persecution; which afflicted him so much, that at the feast of Easter (the Queen of feasts in the primitive church) he wept night and day, and resolved never to know a moment's delight, till through the mercy of God she should be recovered.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 158.—"*I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved.*" Oh, if you have the hearts of Christians or of men in you, let them yearn towards your poor ignorant, ungodly neighbours. Alas, there is but a step betwixt them and death and hell: many hundred diseases are waiting ready to seize on them, and if they die unregenerate they are lost for ever. Have you hearts of

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rock, that cannot pity men in such a case as this? If you believe not the word of God, and the danger of sinners, why are you Christians yourselves? If you do believe it, why do you not bestir yourself to the helping of others? Do you not care who is damned, so you be saved? If so, you have sufficient cause to pity yourselves, for it is a frame of spirit utterly inconsistent with grace: should you not rather say, as the lepers of Samaria, Is it not a day of glad tidings, and do we sit still and hold our peace? 2 Kings vii. 9. Hath God had so much mercy on you, and will you have no mercy on your poor neighbours? You need not go far to find objects for your pity; look but into your streets, or into the next house to you, and you will probably find some. Have you never an ignorant, an unregenerate neighbour that sets his heart on things below, and neglecteth eternity? What blessed place do you live in, where there is none such? If there be not some of them in thine own family, it is well; and yet art thou silent? Dost thou live close by them, or meet them in the streets, or labour with them, or travel with them, or sit and talk with them, and say nothing to them of their souls, or the life to come? If their houses were on fire, thou wouldst run and help them; and wilt thou not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell? If thou knewest but a remedy for their diseases thou wouldst tell it them, or else thou wouldst judge thyself guilty of their death. —*Richard Baxter* (1615—1691), *in* "*The Saints' Everlasting Rest.*"

*Verse* 158.—"*Grieved, because they kept not thy law.*" I never thought the world had been so wicked, when the Gospel began, as now I see it is; I rather hoped that every one would have leaped for joy to have found himself freed from the filth of the Pope, from his lamentable molestations of poor troubled consciences, and that through Christ they would by faith obtain the celestial treasure they sought after before with such vast cost and labour, though in vain. And especially I thought the bishops and universities would with joy of heart have received the true doctrines; but I have been lamentably deceived. Moses and Jeremiah, too, complained they had been deceived.—*Martin Luther.*

*Verse* 158.—"*Grieved.*" The word that is here translated "*grieved*" is from *katal*, that signifies to loathe, abhor, and contend. I beheld the transgressors, and I loathed them; I beheld the transgressors, and I abhorred them; I beheld the transgressors, and I contended with them; but not so much because they were mine enemies, as because they were thine.—*Thomas Brooks.*

*Verse* 158.—The day when I first met Colonel Gardiner at Leicester, I happened to preach a lecture from Ps. cxix. 158: "*I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.*" I was large in describing that mixture of indignation and grief, strongly expressed by the original word there, with which a good man looks on the varying transgressors of the divine law; and in tracing the causes of that grief, as arising from a regard to the divine honour, and the interest of a Redeemer, and a compassionate concern for the misery such offenders bring on themselves, and for the mischief they do to the world about them. I little thought how exactly I was drawing Colonel Gardiner's character under each of those heads; and I have often reflected upon it as a happy providence, which opened a much speedier way than I could have expected, to the breast of one of the most amiable and useful friends which I ever expect to find upon earth. We afterwards sung a hymn, which brought over again some of the leading thoughts in the sermon, and struck him so strongly, that on obtaining a copy of it, he committed it to his memory, and used to repeat it with so forcible an accent, as showed how much every line expressed of his very soul. In this view the reader will pardon my inserting it; especially as I know not when I may get time to publish a volume of these serious though artless compositions, which I sent him in manuscript some years ago, and to which I have since made very large additions:—

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Arise, my tenderest thoughts, arise,
To torrents melt my streaming eyes;
And thou, my heart, with anguish feel
Those evils which thou canst not heal.

See human nature sunk in shame;
See scandals pour'd on Jesu's name;
The Father wounded through the Son;
The world abused, and souls undone.

See the short course of vain delight
Closing in everlasting night;
In flames that no abatement know,
Though briny tears for ever flow.

My God, I feel the mournful scene;
My bowels yearn o'er dying men,
And fain my pity would reclaim,
And snatch the firebrands from the flame.

But feeble my compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves;
Thy own all-saving arm employ,
And turn these drops of grief to joy.

—*Philip Doddridge, in "The Life of Colonel Gardiner."*

*Verse* 159.—"*Consider how I love thy precepts.*" Search me. Behold the evidence of my attachment to thy law. This is the confident appeal of one who was conscious that he was truly attached to God; that he really loved his law. It is similar to the appeal of Peter to the Saviour (John xxi. 17), "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." A man who truly loves God *may* make this appeal without impropriety. He may be so confident, so certain, that he has true love for the character of God, that he may make a solemn appeal to him on the subject, as he might appeal to a friend, to his wife, to his son, to his daughter, with the utmost confidence that he loved them. A man *ought* to have such love for *them*, that he could affirm this without hesitation or doubt; a man *ought* to have such love for *God*, that he could affirm this with equal confidence and propriety.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 159.—"*Consider how I love thy precepts.*" He saith not, consider how I *perform* thy precepts; but how I *love* them. The comfort of a Christian militant, in this body of sin, is rather in the sincerity and fervency of his affections than in the absolute perfection of his actions. He fails many times in his obedience to God's precepts, in regard of his action; but love in his affection still remains; so that both before the temptation to sin, and after it, there is a grief in his soul, that he should find in himself any corrupt will or desire, contrary to the holy will of the Lord his God; and this proves an invincible love in him to the precepts of God.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 159.—"*Consider*," etc. Translate (the Hebrew being the same as in verse 158) "*Behold* how I love thy precepts," as is evinced in that when "I *beheld* the transgressors I was grieved." He begs to God to behold this, not as meritorious of grace, but as a distinctive mark of a godly man.—*A. R. Fausset.*

*Verse* 159.—"*I love thy precepts: quicken me.*" The love wherewith he loved God came from that love wherewith God first loved him. For by seeing the great love wherewith God loved him, he was moved and inforced to love God again. So that his meaning is thus much: Thou seest, Lord, that I am an enemy to sin in myself, for I forget not thy law; thou seest that I am an enemy to sin in others, for I am grieved to see them transgress thy law; wherefore, O Lord, "*quicken me*," and let thy loving mercy whereby thou hast created me and redeemed me in Christ, whereby thou hast delivered me from so many troubles, and enriched me with so many and

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continual benefits, renew, revive, quicken, and restore me.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 159.—"*Quicken me.*" Often as the Psalmist had repeated his prayer for quickening grace,* it was not a "*vain repetition*," or an empty sound. Each time was it enlivened with abundant faith, intense feeling of his necessity, and the vehemency of most ardent affection. If the consciousness of the faintness of our strength and the coldness of our affections should lead us to offer this petition a hundred times a day in this spirit, it would never fail of acceptance.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 159.—"*According to thy lovingkindness.*" We need not desire to be quickened any further than God's lovingkindness will quicken us.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 160.—"*Thy word is true from the beginning.*" Literally, "The beginning of thy word is truth," in antithesis to the "enduring for ever," in the future, in the next clause. Cocceius and Hengstenberg take it, "The *sum* of thy word is true," as in Numbers xxvi. 2; xxxi. 26. But the antithesis noticed above in the English version is thus lost; and the old versions support the English version. Also, if it were "*the sum*," the plural ought to follow, viz., "of thy *words*," not "*word.*"—*A. R. Fausset.*

*Verse* 160.—"*Thy word is true from the beginning*," etc. As if he should say, I believe that thou wilt thus quicken me, because the very beginning of thy word is most just and true; and when thou didst first enter into covenant with me, I did find that thou didst not deceive me, nor beguile me. And when by thy Spirit thou madest me believe thy covenant, thou meanedst truth; and I know that as thou didst promise, thou wilt perform, for thou art no more liberal in promising than faithful and just in performing, and thy judgment will be as righteous as thy promise is true. I know that as soon as thou speakest, truth proceedeth from thee; and even so I know thou wilt defend and preserve me, that thy judgments may shine as righteous in thee.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 160.—"*Thy word is true from the beginning*," etc. God's commandment and promise is exceeding broad, reaching to all times. Was a word of command "the guide of thy youth"? I assure thee it will be as good a staff of thine age. A good promise is a good nurse, both to the young babe and to the decrepid old man. Your apothecaries' best cordials in time will lose their spirits, and sometimes the stronger they are, the sooner. But hath a promise cheered thee, say, twenty, thirty, forty years ago? Taste it but now afresh, and thou shalt find it as fresh, and as full of refreshment as ever. If it hath been thy greatest joy in thy joyful youth, I tell thee, it hath as much joy in it for thy sad old age. That may be said of God's word, which the prophet saith of God himself (Isai. xlvi. 4): "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you." Doth not the Psalmist say as much here, "*Thy word is true from the beginning*"? It's well, it begins well. But will it last as well? Yes: he adds, "*and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.*" Answerable to which is that other expression (verse 152), "*Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.*" "For ever," and "founded for ever." O sweet expression! O grounded comfort! Brethren, get acquainted with God's word and promise as soon as you can, and maintain that acquaintance everlastingly; and your knowledge of it shall not either go before, or go beyond its truth. Know it as soon and as long as you will or can, and you shall never find it tripping or failing; but you may after long experience of God say of it, "*I have known of old that thou hast founded it for ever.*"—*Anthony Tuckney*, 1599—1670.

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* Nine times is this petition urged, verses 25, 37, 40, 88, 107, 149, 154, 156, 159.

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 161 TO 168.

PRINCES have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

162 I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

163 I hate and abhor lying: *but* thy law do I love.

164 Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.

165 Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

166 LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

167 My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.

168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies; for all my ways *are* before thee.

161. "*Princes have persecuted me without a cause.*" Such persons ought to have known better; they should have had sympathy with one of their own rank. A man expects a fair trial at the hand of his peers: it is ignoble to be prejudiced. Moreover, if honour be banished from all other breasts it should remain in the bosom of kings, and honour forbids the persecution of the innocent. Princes are appointed to protect the innocent and avenge the oppressed, and it is a shame when they themselves become the assailants of the righteous. It was a sad case when the man of God found himself attacked by the judges of the earth, for eminent position added weight and venom to their enmity. It was well that the sufferer could truthfully assert that this persecution was without cause. He had not broken their laws, he had not injured them, he had not even desired to see them injured, he had not been an advocate of rebellion or anarchy, he had neither openly nor secretly opposed their power, and therefore, while this made their oppression the more inexcusable, it took away a part of its sting, and helped the brave-hearted servant of God to bear up. "*But my heart standeth in awe of thy word.*" He might have been overcome by awe of the princes had it not been that a greater fear drove out the less, and he was swayed by awe of God's word. How little do crowns and sceptres become in the judgment of that man who perceives a more majestic royalty in the commands of his God. We are not likely to be disheartened by persecution, or driven by it into sin, if the word of God continually has supreme power over our minds.

162. "*I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.*" His awe did not prevent his joy; his fear of God was not of the kind which perfect love casts out, but of the sort which it nourishes. He trembled at the word of the Lord, and yet rejoiced at it. He compares his joy to that of one who has been long in battle, and has at last won the victory and is dividing the spoil. This usually falls to the lot of princes, and though David was not one with them in their persecutions, yet he had his victories, and his spoil was equal to their greatest gains. The profits made in searching the Scriptures were greater than the trophies of war. We too have to fight for divine truth; every doctrine costs us a battle, but when we gain a full understanding of it by personal struggles it becomes doubly precious to us. In these days godly men have a full share of battling for the word of God; may we have for our spoil a firmer hold upon the priceless word. Perhaps, however, the Psalmist may have rejoiced as one who comes upon hidden treasure for which he had not fought, in which case we find the analogy in the man of God who, while reading the Bible, makes grand and blessed discoveries of the grace of God laid up for him,—discoveries which surprise

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him, for he looked not to find such a prize. Whether we come by the truth as finders or as warriors fighting for it, the heavenly treasure should be equally dear to us. With what quiet joy does the ploughman steal home with his golden find! How victors shout as they share the plunder! How glad should that man be who has discovered his portion in the promises of holy writ, and is able to enjoy it for himself, knowing by the witness of the Holy Spirit that it is all his own.

163. "*I hate and abhor lying.*" A double expression for an inexpressible loathing. Falsehood in doctrine, in life, or in speech, falsehood in any form or shape, had become utterly detestable to the Psalmist. This was a remarkable state for an Oriental, for generally lying is the delight of Easterns, and the only wrong they see in it is a want of skill in its exercise so that the liar is found out. David himself had made much progress when he had come to this. He does not, however, alone refer to falsehood in conversation; he evidently intends perversity in faith and teaching. He set down all opposition to the God of truth as lying, and then he turned his whole soul against it in the intensest form of indignation. Godly men should detest false doctrine even as they abhor a lie. "*But thy law do I love,*" because it is all truth. His love was as ardent as his hate. True men love truth, and hate lying. It is well for us to know which way our hates and loves run, and we may do essential service to others by declaring what are their objects. Both love and hate are contagious, and when they are sanctified the wider their influence the better.

164. "*Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.*" He laboured perfectly to praise his perfect God, and therefore fulfilled the perfect number of songs. Seven may also intend frequency. Frequently he lifted up his heart in thanksgiving to God for his divine teachings in the word, and for his divine actions in providence. With his voice he extolled the righteousness of the Judge of all the earth. As often as ever he thought of God's ways a song leaped to his lips. At the sight of the oppressive princes, and at the hearing of the abounding falsehood around him, he felt all the more bound to adore and magnify God, who in all things is truth and righteousness. When others rob us of our praise it should be a caution to us not to fall into the same conduct towards our God, who is so much more worthy of honour. If we praise God when we are persecuted our music will be all the sweeter to him because of our constancy in suffering. If we keep clear of all lying, our song will be the more acceptable because it comes out of pure lips. If we never flatter men we shall be in the better condition for honouring the Lord. Do we praise God seven times a day? Do we praise him once in seven days?

165. "*Great peace have they which love thy law.*" What a charming verse is this! It deals not with those who perfectly keep the law, for where should such men be found? but with those who love it, whose hearts and hands are made to square with its precepts and demands. These men are ever striving, with all their hearts, to walk in obedience to the law, and though they are often persecuted they have peace, yea, *great* peace; for they have learned the secret of the reconciling blood, they have felt the power of the comforting Spirit, and they stand before the Father as men accepted. The Lord has given them to feel his peace, which passed all understanding. They have many troubles, and are likely to be persecuted by the proud, but their usual condition is that of deep calm—a peace too great for this little world to break. "*And nothing shall offend them,*" or, "shall really injure them." "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." It must needs be that offences come, but these lovers of the law are peacemakers, and so they neither give nor take offence. That peace which is founded upon conformity to God's will is a living and lasting one, worth writing of with enthusiasm, as the Psalmist here does.

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166. "LORD, *I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.*" Here we have salvation by grace, and the fruits thereof. All David's hope was fixed upon God, he looked to him alone for salvation; and then he endeavoured most earnestly to fulfil the commands of his law. Those who place least reliance upon good works are very frequently those who have the most of them; that same divine teaching which delivers us from confidence in our own doings leads us to abound in every good work to the glory of God. In times of trouble there are two things to be done, the first is to hope in God, and the second is to do that which is right. The first without the second would be mere presumption: the second without the first mere formalism. It is well if in looking back we can claim to have acted in the way which is commanded of the Lord. If we have acted rightly towards God we are sure that he will act kindly with us.

167. "*My soul hath kept thy testimonies.*" My outward life has kept thy precepts, and my inward life—my soul, has kept thy testimonies. God has borne testimony to many sacred truths, and these we hold fast as for life itself. The gracious man stores up the truth of God within his heart as a treasure exceedingly dear and precious—he keeps it. His secret soul, his inmost self, becomes the guardian of these divine teachings which are his sole authority in soul matters. "*And I love them exceedingly.*" This was why he kept them, and having kept them this was the result of the keeping. He did not merely store up revealed truth by way of duty, but because of a deep, unutterable affection for it. He felt that he could sooner die than give up any part of the revelation of God. The more we store our minds with heavenly truth, the more deeply shall we be in love with it: the more we see the exceeding riches of the Bible the more will our love exceed measure, and exceed expression.

168. "*I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies.*" Both the practical and the doctrinal parts of God's word he had stored up, and preserved, and followed. It is a blessed thing to see the two forms of the divine word, equally known, equally valued, equally confessed: there should be no picking and choosing as to the mind of God. We know those who endeavour to be careful as to the precepts, but who seem to think that the doctrines of the gospel are mere matters of opinion, which they may shape for themselves. This is not a perfect condition of things. We have known others again who are very rigid as to the doctrines, and painfully lax with reference to the precepts. This also is far from right. When the two are "kept" with equal earnestness then have we the perfect man. "*For all my ways are before thee.*" Probably he means to say that this was the motive of his endeavouring to be right both in head and heart, because he knew that God saw him, and under the sense of the divine presence he was afraid to err. Or else he is thus appealing to God to bear witness to the truth of what he has said. In either case it is no small consolation to feel that our heavenly Father knows all about us, and that if princes speak against us, and worldlings fill their mouths with cruel lies, yet he can vindicate us, for there is nothing secret or hidden from him.

We are struck with the contrast between this verse, which is the last of its octave, and verse 176, which is similarly placed in the next octave. This is a protest of innocence, "I have kept thy precepts," and that a confession of sin, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." Both were sincere, both accurate. Experience makes many a paradox plain, and this is one. Before God we may be clear of open fault and yet at the same time mourn over a thousand heart-wanderings which need his restoring hand.

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## NOTES ON VERSES 161 TO 168.

*Verse* 161.—"*Princes have persecuted me.*" The evil is aggravated from the consideration that it is the very persons who ought to be as bucklers to defend us, who employ their strength in hurting us. Yea, when the afflicted are stricken by those in high places, they in a manner think that the hand of God is against them. There was also this peculiarity in the case of the prophet, that he had to encounter the grandees of the chosen people—men whom God had placed in such honourable stations, to the end they might be the pillars of the Church.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 161.—"*Without a cause.*" I settle it as an established point with me, that the more diligently and faithfully I serve Christ, the greater reproach and the more injury I must expect. I have drank deep of the cup of slander and reproach of late, but I am in no wise discouraged; no, nor by, what is much harder to bear, the unsuccessfulness of my endeavours to mend this bad world.—*Philip Doddridge.*

*Verse* 161.—"*Without a cause.*" We know what persecutions the body of Christ, that is, the holy Church, suffered from the kings of the earth. Let us therefore here also recognize the words of the Church: "*Princes have persecuted me without a cause.*" For how had the Christians injured the kingdoms of the earth? Although their King promised them the kingdom of heaven, how, I ask, had they injured the kingdoms of earth? Did their King forbid his soldiers to pay and to render due service to the kings of the earth? Saith he not to the Jews who were striving to calumniate him, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's"? Matt. xxii. 21. Did he not even in his own person pay tribute from the mouth of a fish? Did not his forerunner, when the soldiers of this kingdom were seeking what they ought to do for their everlasting salvation, instead of replying, "Loose your belts, throw away your arms, desert your king, that ye may wage war for the Lord," answer, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages"? Luke iii. 14. Did not one of his soldiers, his most beloved companion, say to his fellow soldiers, the provincials, so to speak, of Christ, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers"? and a little lower he addeth, "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything, but to love one another." Rom. xiii. 1, 7, 8. Does he not enjoin the Church to pray even for kings themselves? How, then, have the Christians offended against them? What due have they not rendered? In what have not Christians obeyed the monarchs of earth? The kings of the earth therefore have persecuted the Christians *without a cause.*—*Augustine.*

*Verse* 161.—"*But my heart standeth in awe of thy word.*" If there remains any qualm of fear on thy heart, fear from the wrath of bloody men threatening thee for thy profession of the truth, then to a heart inflamed with the love of truth, labour to add a heart filled with the fear of that wrath which God hath in store for all that apostatize from the truth. When you chance to burn your finger, you hold it to the fire, which being a greater fire draws out the other. Thus, when thy thoughts are scorched, and thy heart scared with the fire of man's wrath, hold them a while to hell fire, which God hath prepared for the fearful (Rev. xxi. 8), and all that run away from truth's colours (Heb. x. 39), and thou wilt lose the sense of the one for fear of the other. *Ignosce imperator*, saith the holy man, *tu carcerem, Deus gehennam minatur;* "Pardon me, O Emperor, if I obey not thy command: thou threatenest a prison, but God a hell." Observable is that of David: "Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word." He had no cause to fear them that had no cause to persecute him. One threatening out of the word, that sets the point of God's wrath

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to his heart, scares him more than the worst that the greatest on earth can do to him. Man's wrath, when hottest, is but a temperate climate to the wrath of the living God. They who have felt both have testified as much. Man's wrath cannot hinder the access of God's love to the creature, which hath made the saints sing in the fire, in spite of their enemies' teeth. But the creature under God's wrath is like one shut up in a close oven, no crevice is open to let any of the heat out, or any refreshing in to him.—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse* 161.—"*My heart standeth in awe of thy word.*" There is an *awe* of the word, not that maketh us shy of it, but tender of violating it, or doing anything contrary to it. This is not the fruit of slavish fear, but of holy love; it is not afraid of the word, but delighteth in it, as it discovereth the mind of God to us; as in the next verse it is written, "I rejoice at thy word." This awe is called by a proper name, reverence, or godly fear; when we consider whose word it is, namely, the word of the Lord, who is our God, and hath a right to command what he pleaseth; to whose will and word we have already yielded obedience, and devoted ourselves to walk worthy of him in all well-pleasing; who can find us out in all our failings, as knowing our very thoughts afar off (Ps. cxxxix. 2), and having all our ways before him, and being one of whom we read,—"He is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins" (Josh. xxiv. 19), that is to say, if we impenitently continue in them. Considering these things we receive the word with that trembling of heart which God so much respects.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 161.—"*In awe of thy word.*" I would advise you all, that come to the reading or hearing of this book, which is the word of God, the most precious jewel, and most holy relic that remaineth upon earth, that ye bring with you the fear of God, and that ye do it with all due reverence, and use your knowledge thereof, not to vain glory of frivolous disputation, but to the honour of God, increase of virtue, and edification both of yourselves and others.—*Thomas Cranmer*, 1489—1555.

*Verse* 161.—"*Awe of thy word.*" They that tremble at the convictions of the word may triumph in the consolations of it.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 162.—"*I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.*" He never came to an ordinance but as a soldier to the spoil, after a great battle, as having a constant warfare with his corruptions that fought against his soul. Now he comes to see what God will say to him, and he will make himself a saver [or gainer], and get a booty out of every commandment, promise, or threatening he hears.—*John Cotton* (1585—1652), *in* "*The way of life.*"

*Verse* 162.—"*I rejoice at thy word.*" "Euripides," saith the orator, "hath in his well-composed tragedies more sentiments than sayings;" and Thucydides hath so stuffed every syllable of his history with substance, that the one runs parallel along with the other; Lysias's works are so well couched that you cannot take out the least word but you take away the whole sense with it; and Phocion had a special faculty of speaking much in a few words. The Cretians, in Plato's time (however degenerated in St. Paul's), were more weighty than wordy; Timanthes was famous in this, that in his pictures more things were intended than deciphered; and of Homer it is said that none could ever peer him for poetry. Then how much more apt and apposite are these high praises to the book of God, rightly called *the Bible* or *the book*, as if it were, as indeed it is, both for fitness of terms and fulness of truth, the only book to which (as Luther saith) all the books in the world are but waste paper. It is called *the word*, by way of eminency, because it must be the butt and boundary of all our words; and *the scripture*, as the lord paramount above all other words or writings of men collected into volumes, there being, as the Rabbins say, a mountain of sense hanging upon every tittle of it, whence may be gathered flowers and phrases to polish our speeches with,



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even sound words, that have a healing property in them, far above all filed phrases of human elocution.—*Thomas Adams.*

*Verse* 162.—"*As one that findeth great spoil.*" This expressive image may remind us of the inward conflict to be endured in acquiring the spoils of this precious word. It is so contrary to our natural taste and temper, that habitual self-denial and struggle with the indisposition of the heart can alone enable us to "*find the spoil.*" But what "*great spoil*" is divided as the fruit of the conflict! How rich and abundant is the recompense of the "good soldier of Jesus Christ," who is determined through the power of the Spirit to "endure hardness," until he overcome the reluctance of his heart to this spiritual duty. He shall "*rejoice*" in "*finding great spoil.*" Sometimes—as the spoil with which the lepers enriched themselves in the Syrian camp—it may be found unexpectedly. Sometimes we see the riches and treasures contained in a passage or doctrine, long before we can make it our own. And often when we gird ourselves to the conflict with indolence, and wanderings, under the weakness of our spiritual perceptions and the power of unbelief, many a prayer, and many a sigh is sent up for Divine aid, before we are crowned with victory, and are enabled, as the fruit of our conquest joyfully to appropriate the word to our present need and distress. —*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 163.—"*I hate and abhor lying,*" etc. One sees here how the light on David's soul was increasing more and more unto the perfect day. In the earlier part of this psalm, David in the recollection of his own sin had prayed, "Remove from me the way of lying," and the Lord had indeed answered his prayer, for he now declares his utter loathing of every false way: "*I hate and abhor lying.*" And we see, in some measure, the instrument by which the Holy Spirit wrought the change: "*Thy law do I love*"; nay, as he adds in a later verse, "I love them exceedingly." And so it ever must be, the heart must have some holier object of its affection to fill up the void, or there will be no security against a relapse into sin. I might talk for ever on the sin, the disgrace, and the danger of lying, and though at the time and for a time my words might have some influence, yet, unless the heart be filled with the love of God and of God's law, the first temptation would prove too powerful. The Bible teaches us this in a variety of ways. God says to Israel, not only "cease to do evil," but, "learn to do well." And still more pointedly does the apostle, when he was warring against drunkenness, say, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess,—but be filled with the Spirit."—*Barton Bouchier.*

*Verse* 163.—"*I hate and abhor lying.*" "*Lying,*" according to Scripture usage, not only signifies speaking contrary to what one thinks, but also thinking contrary to the truth of things, and, particularly, the giving to any other of that worship and glory which are due to the true God alone. It is to think and act aside from God's truth. The men who persecuted that godly man thought of earthly prosperity and power as they should not have thought; they judged God's servant falsely, and they thought wickedly of God himself. The man of God took a view of these things; he saw the wickedness and the vileness of them, and he continued—"*Falsehood I hate and abhor: thy law do I love.*" From all the false and delusive ways of men, from all the pride and pomp that surround courts, from the sinful pleasures and pursuits of worldly men, as well as from the ostentatious idolatry of heathen nations, he could turn with heart delight to the contemplation of Jehovah, in that wonderful ritual which manifested the divine mercy in vicarious sacrifices, and observances, and festivals; and to that holy law which was given as man's rule of duty and grateful obedience, and all these he loved as the manifestations of God's grace.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 163.—"*I hate and abhor lying*": not only "*hate*" it, nor simply I "*abhor*" it, but "*hate and abhor,*" to strengthen and increase the sense,

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and make it more vehement. Where the enmity is not great against the sin, the matter may be compounded and taken up; but David will have nothing to do with it, for he saith,—I loathe and abhor it, and hate it with a deadly hatred. Slight hatred of a sinful course is not sufficient to guard us against it.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 163.—Sin seemeth to have its name from the Hebrew word *sana, to hate*, the word here used, because it is most of all to be hated, as the greatest evil, as that which setteth us furthest from God the greatest good. None can hate it but those that love the law of God; for all hatred comes from love. A natural man may be angry with his sin, but hate it he cannot; nay, he may leave it, but not loathe it; if he did, he would loathe all sin as well as any one sin.—*Abraham Wright.*

*Verse* 163.—"*Lying.*" All injustice is abominable: to do any sort of wrong is a heinous crime, but lying is that crime which, above all others, tendeth to the dissolution of society and disturbance of human life; which God therefore doth most loathe, and men have reason especially to detest. Of this the slanderer is most deeply guilty. "A witness of Belial scorneth judgment, and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity," saith the wise man: Prov. xix. 28. He is indeed, according to just estimation, guilty of all kinds of injury, breaking all the second table of commands respecting our neighbour. Most distinctly he beareth false witness against his neighbour: he doth covet his neighbour's goods, for 'tis constantly out of such an irregular desire, for his own presumed advantage, to dispossess his neighbour of some good, and transfer it on himself, that the slanderer uttereth his tale: he is also a thief and robber of his good name, a deflowerer and defiler of his reputation, an assassin and murderer of his honour. So doth he violate all the rules of justice, and perpetrateth all sorts of wrong against his neighbour.—*Isaac Barrow.*

*Verse* 164.—"*Seven times a day do I praise thee.*" Affections of the soul cannot long be kept secret; if they be strong they will break forth in actions. The love of God is like a fire in the heart of man, which breaks forth, and manifests itself in the obedience of his commandments, and praising him for his benefits; and this is it which David now protests, that the love of God was not idle in his heart, but made him fervent and earnest in praising God, so that "*seven times a day*" he did praise God. For by this number the carefulness of holy devotion is expressed, and the fervency of his love. In praising God he could not be satisfied, saith Basil. —*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 164.—"*Seven times a day do I praise thee.*" "As every grace," says Sibbes, "increaseth by exercise of itself, so doth the grace of prayer. By prayer we learn to pray." And thus it was with the Psalmist; he oftentimes anticipated the dawning of the morning for his exercise of prayer; and at midnight frequently arose to pour out his soul in prayer; now he adds that "*seven times in a day,*" or as we might express it, "at every touch and turn," he finds opportunity for and delight in praise. Oh for David's spirit and David's practice!—*Barton Bouchier.*

*Verse* 164.—"*Seven times a day do I praise thee.*" A Christian ought to give himself up eminently to this duty without limits.—*Walter Marshall.*

*Verse* 164.—"*Seven times a day do I praise thee.*" Not as if he had seven set hours for this duty every day, as the Papists would have it, to countenance their seven canonical hours, but rather a definite number is put for an indefinite, and so amounts to this,—he did very often in a day praise God; his holy heart taking the hint of every providence to carry him to heaven on this errand of prayer and praise.—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse* 164.—"*Seven times a day.*" Some of the Jewish Rabbis affirm that David is here to be understood literally, observing, that the devout Hebrews were accustomed to praise God twice in the morning, before reading the

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ten commandments, and once after; twice in the evening before reading the same portion of inspiration, and twice after; which makes up the number of seven times a day.—*James Anderson's note to Calvin in loc.*

*Verse* 165.—"*Great peace have they which love thy law.*" Amidst the storms and tempests of the world, there is a perfect calm in the breasts of those, who not only do the will of God, but "*love*" to do it. They are at peace with God, by the blood of reconciliation; at peace with themselves, by the answer of a good conscience, and the subjection of those desires which war against the soul; at peace with all men, by the spirit of charity; and the whole creation is so at peace with them that all things work together for their good. No external troubles can rob them of this "*great peace,*" no "offences" or stumbling blocks, which are thrown in their way by persecution, or temptation, by the malice of enemies, or by the apostacy of friends, by anything which they see, hear of, or feel, can detain, or divert them from their course. Heavenly love surmounts every obstacle, and runs with delight the way of God's commandments.—*George Horne.*

*Verse* 165.—"*Great peace have they which love thy law.*" There have been Elis trembling for the ark of God, and Uzzahs putting out their hand in fear that it was going to fall; but in the midst of the deepest troubles through which the church has passed, and the fiercest storms that have raged about it, there have been true, faithful men of God who have never despaired. In every age there have been Luthers and Latimers, who have not only held fast their confidence, but whose peace has deepened with the roaring of the waves. The more they have been forsaken of men, the closer has been their communion with God. And with strong hold of him and of his promises, and hearts that could enter into the secret place of the Most High, although there has been everything without to agitate, threaten, and alarm, they have been guided into perfect peace.—*James Martin, in "The Christian Mirror, and other Sermons,"* 1878.

*Verse* 165.—"*Great peace have they which love thy law.*" Clearness of conscience is a help to comfortable thoughts. Yet observe, that peace is not so much effected as preserved by a good conscience and conversation; for though joy in the Holy Ghost will make its nest nowhere but in a holy soul, yet the blood of Christ only can speak peace; "being justified by faith, we have peace:" Rom. v. 1. An exact life will not make, but keep conscience quiet; an easy shoe does not heal a sore foot, but it keeps a sound one from hurt. Walking with God according to gospel rules hath peace entailed upon it, and that peace is such a treasure, as thereby a Christian may have his rejoicing from himself. Gal. vi. 4, 16. His own heart sings him a merry tune, which the threats and reproaches of the world cannot silence. The treasure of comfort is not expended in affliction; death itself doth not exhaust but increase and advance it to an eternal triumph. O the excellency and necessity of it! Paul laid it up for a death-bed cordial: "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience:" 2 Cor. i. 12. And Hezekiah dares hold it up to God, as well as cheer up himself with it on approaching death. A conscience good in point of integrity will be good also in point of tranquillity: "The righteous are bold as a lion": they have great peace that love and keep God's commandments: Prov. xxviii. 1; Ps. cxix. 165. And saith the apostle, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God" (1 John iii. 2), and I may add also, towards men. Oh! what comfort and solace hath a clear conscience! A conscientious man hath something within to answer accusations without; he hath such a rich treasure as will not fail in greatest straits and hazards. I shall conclude this with a notable saying of Bernard:—"The pleasures of a good conscience are the Paradise of souls, the joy of angels, a garden of delights, a field of blessing, the temple of Solomon, the court of God, the habitation of the Holy Spirit."—*Oliver Heywood.*

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*Verse* 165.—"*Great peace.*" Note that for "*peace*" the Hebrew word is שָׁלוֹם, *shâlom:* it signifies not only "*peace,*" but also *perfection, wholeness, prosperity, tranquillity, healthfulness, safety,* the *completion* and *consummation* of every good thing; and so it is frequently taken by the Hebrews; hence in salutations, wishing one the other well, they say, שָׁלוֹם לָךְ, *shâlom lekha, i.e*, "peace be with thee"; as if one should say, "may all things be prosperous with thee."—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse* 165.—"*They which love thy law.*" To *love* a law may seem strange; but it is the only true divine life. To keep it because we are afraid of its penalties is only a form of fear or prudential consideration. To keep it to preserve a good name may be propriety and respectability. To keep it because it is best for society may be worldly self-interest. To keep it because of physical health may be the policy of epicurean philosophy. To keep it because we love it is to show that it is already part of us—has entered into the moral texture of our being. Sin then becomes distasteful, and temptations lose their power.—*W. M. Statham, quoted in "A Homiletic Commentary on the Psalms,"* 1879.

*Verse* 165.—"*And nothing shall offend them.*" Hebrew, "they shall have no *stumblingblock.*" 1 John ii. 10, "There is none *occasion of stumbling* in him" who abides in *the light,* which makes him to see and avoid such stumblingblocks. Wealth, tribulation, temptation, which are the occasion to many of falling (Isai. viii. 14, 15; Ezek. iii. 20; vii. 19; xiv. 3, 4, 7), are not so to him.—*A. R. Faussett.*

*Verse* 165.—Learn the true wisdom of those of you who are new creatures, and who love God's holy law. All of you who are really brought to Christ are changed into his image, so that you love God's holy law. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart": Ps. xix. The world says: What a slave you are! you cannot have a little amusement on the Sabbath—you cannot take a Sabbath walk, or join a Sabbath tea-party; you cannot go to a dance or a theatre; you cannot enjoy the pleasures of sensual indulgence—you are a slave. I answer: Christ had none of these pleasures. He did not want them: nor do we. He knew what was truly wise, and good, and happy, and he chose God's holy law. He was the freest of all beings, and yet he knew no sin. Only make me free as Christ is free—this is all I ask. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them."—*Robert Murray M'Cheyne,* 1813—1843.

*Verse* 165.—"*Nothing shall offend them.*" They that have this character of God's children, will not be stumbled at God's dispensations, let them be never so cross to their desires, because they have a God to fly unto in all their troubles, and a sure covenant to rest upon. Therefore the reproaches cast upon them, and on the way of God, do not scandalize them; for they have found God in that very way which others speak evil of; they are not so offended by anything that attends the way of God, as to dislike or forsake that way. Nevertheless we must take heed that we be not offended.—*John Bunyan.*

*Verse* 166.—"LORD, *I have hoped for thy salvation,*" etc. This is the true posture in which all the servants of God should desire to be found—hoping in his mercy, and doing his commands. How easy were it to demonstrate the connection between the mental feeling here recognized, and the obedience with which it is here associated! It is the hope of salvation which is the great and pervading motive to holiness, and it is the consciousness of obedience to the will of God which strengthens our hope of interest in the divine mercy.—*John Morison.*

*Verse* 166.—"*Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation.*" This saying he borrowed from good old Jacob. Gen. xlix. 18.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 166.—"*I have done thy commandments.*" Set upon the practice of

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what you read. A student in physic doth not satisfy himself to read over a system or body of physic, but he falls upon practising physic: the life-blood of religion lies in the practical part. Christians should be walking Bibles. Xenophon said, "Many read Lycurgus's laws, but few observe them." The word written is not only a rule of knowledge, but a rule of obedience; it is not only to mend our sight, but to mend our pace. David calls God's word "a lamp unto his feet" (verse 105). It was not only a light to his eyes to see by, but to his feet to walk by. By practice we trade with the talent of knowledge, and turn it to profit. This is a blessed reading of Scripture, when we fly from the sins which the word forbids, and espouse the doctrines which the word commands. Reading without practice will be but a torch to light men to hell.—*Thomas Watson.*

*Verses* 166, 167, 168.—He that casts the commands behind his back is very presumptuous in applying the promises to himself. That hope which is not accompanied with obedience will make a man ashamed. He that has learned the word of God knows that the law is not made void by faith, but established: Rom. iii. 31. Christ the church's Head and Prophet, in his sermon upon the mount shows the extent of the law, requiring purity in the heart and thoughts, as well as in the life and actions, and condemns them "who shall break the least of these commands and shall teach men so"; but "those that teach and do them," he owns as great in his kingdom: Matt. v. 19. The law spoken on Mount Sinai is established by the Legislator Christ in Mount Zion as a rule of righteousness. And they who are rightly instructed, "which walk according to this rule," will have both heart and conversation ordered according to its direction, and "peace and mercy will be upon them," and hereby they will show themselves to be indeed the Israel of God.—*Nathanael Vincent.*

*Verse* 167.—"*My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.*" Should he not have said, first, I have loved thy commandments, and so have kept them? Doubtless he did so; but he ran here in a holy and most heavenly circle, I have kept them and loved them, and loved them and kept them. If we love Christ, we shall also live the life of love in our measure, and his commandments will be most dear when himself is most precious.—*Thomas Shepard, in "The Sound Believer,"* 1671.

*Verse* 167.—"*My soul.*" It is a usual phrase among the Hebrews, when they would express their vehement affection to anything, to say, "*My soul*": as Ps. ciii. 1 and civ. 1, "*My soul*, praise thou the Lord," and Luke i. "*My soul* doth magnify the Lord."—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 167.—"*I love them exceedingly.*" It is only a reasonable return to God; for the Father loved me so *exceedingly* as not to spare his own Son, but to give him up for me; and the Son loved me so *exceedingly* that he gave himself to me, and gave me back to myself when I was lost in my sins, original and actual.—*Gerhohus* (1093—1169), *in Neale and Littledale.*

*Verses* 167, 168.—Let not our consciousness of daily failures make us shrink from this strong expression of confidence. It is alleged as an evidence of grace, not as a claim of merit, and therefore the most humble believer need not hesitate to adopt it as the expression of Christian sincerity before God. David aspired to no higher character than that of a poor sinner: but he was conscious of spirituality of obedience, "*exceeding love*" to the divine word, and an habitual walk under the eye of his God—the evidences of a heart (often mentioned in the Old Testament) "perfect with him."—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 168.—"*I have kept thy precepts, for all my ways are before thee.*" When men are some way off in a king's eye they will be comely in their carriage; but when they come into his presence-chamber to speak with him they will be most careful. Because saints are always in God's sight, their constant deportment must be pious and seemly.—*George Swinnock.*

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*Verse* 168.—"*I have kept thy precepts,*" etc. The Hebrew word שָׁמַר, *shamar*, that is here rendered "*kept,*" signifies to keep carefully, diligently, studiously, exactly. It signifies to keep as men keep prisoners, and to keep as a watchman keeps the city or the garrison; yea, to keep as a man would keep his very life. But now mark what was the reason that David kept the precepts and the testimonies of the Lord so carefully, so sincerely, so diligently, so studiously, and so exactly. Why, the reason you have in the latter part of the verse, "*for all my ways are before thee.*" O sirs! it is as necessary for him that would be eminent in holiness, to set the Lord always before him, as it is necessary for him to breathe. In that 31st of Job you have a very large narrative of that height and perfection of holiness that Job had attained to, and the great reason that he gives you, for this is in the 4th verse, "Doth not he see my way, and count all my steps?" The eye of God had so strong an influence upon his heart and life, that it wrought him up to a very high pitch of holiness.—*Thomas Brooks.*

*Verse* 168.—"*All my ways are before thee.*" That God seeth the secrets of our heart, is a point terrible to the wicked but joyful to the godly. The wicked are sorry that their heart is so open: it is a boiling pot of all mischief, a furnace and forge-house for evil. It grieveth them that man should hear and see their words and actions; but what a terror is this—that their Judge, whom they hate, seeth their thought! If they could deny this, they would. But so many of them as are convinced and forced to acknowledge a God, are shaken betimes with this also—that he is All-seeing. Others proceed more summarily, and at once deny the Godhead in their heart, and so destroy this conscience of his All-knowledge. But it is in vain: the more they harden their heart by this godless thought, the more fear is in them; while they choke and check their conscience that it crow not against them it checketh them with foresight of fearful vengeance and for the present convinceth them of the omniscience of God, the more they press to suppress it. But the godly rejoice herein; it is to them a rule to square their thoughts by; they take no liberty of evil thinking, willing, wishing, or affecting, in their hearts. Where that candle shineth, all things are framed as worthy of him and of his sight, whom they know to be seeing their heart.—*William Struther*, 1633.

*Verse* 168.—"*All my ways are before thee.*" Walk, Christian, in the view of God's omniscience; say to thy soul, *cave, videt Deus;* take heed, God seeth. It is under the rose, as the common phrase is, that treason is spoken, when subjects think they are far enough from their king's hearing; but did such know the prince to be under the window, or behind the hangings, their discourse would be more loyal. This made David so upright in his walking: "*I have kept thy precepts, for all my ways are before thee.*" If Alexander's empty chair, which his captains, when they met in counsel, set before them, did awe them so as to keep them in good order; how helpful would it be to set before ourselves the fact that God is looking upon us! The Jews covered Christ's face, and then buffeted him: Mark xiv. 65. So does the hypocrite; he first says in his heart, God sees not, or at least forgets that he sees, and then he makes bold to sin against him; like that foolish bird, which runs her head among the reeds, and thinks herself safe from the fowler, as if because she did not see her enemy, therefore he could not see her. *Te mihi abscondam, non me tibi* (Augustine). I may hide thee from my eye, but not myself from thine eye.—*William Gurnall.*

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## EXPOSITION OF VERSES 169 TO 176.

LET my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word.

170 Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

171 My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

172 My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness.

173 Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts.

174 I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law *is* my delight.

175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me.

176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.

The Psalmist is approaching the end of the psalm, and his petitions gather force and fervency; he seems to break into the inner circle of divine fellowship, and to come even to the feet of the great God whose help he is imploring. This nearness creates the most lowly view of himself, and leads him to close the psalm upon his face in deepest self-humiliation, begging to be sought out like a lost sheep.

169. "*Let my cry come near before thee, O* LORD." He is tremblingly afraid lest he should not be heard. He is conscious that his prayer is nothing better than the cry of a poor child, or the groan of a wounded beast. He dreads lest it should be shut out from the ear of the Most High, but he very boldly prays that it may come before God, that it may be in his sight, under his notice, and looked upon with his acceptance; yea, he goes further, and entreats, "Let my cry come near before thee, O Lord." He wants the Lord's attention to his prayer to be very close and considerate. He uses a figure of speech and personifies his prayer. We may picture his prayer as Esther, venturing into the royal presence, entreating an audience, and begging to find favour in the sight of the blessed and only Potentate. It is a very sweet thing to a suppliant when he knows of a surety that his prayer has obtained audience, when it has trodden the sea of glass before the throne, and has come even to the footstool of the glorious seat around which heaven and earth adore. It is to *Jehovah* that this prayer is expressed with trembling earnestness—our translators, filled with holy reverence, translate the word, "O LORD." We crave audience of none else, for we have confidence in none beside. "*Give me understanding according to thy word.*" This is the prayer about which the Psalmist is so exceedingly anxious. With all his gettings he would get understanding, and whatever he misses he is resolved not to miss this priceless boon. He desires spiritual light and understanding as it is promised in God's word, as it proceeds from God's word, and as it produces obedience to God's word. He pleads as though he had no understanding whatever of his own, and asks to have one given to him. "Give me understanding." In truth, he had an understanding according to the judgment of men, but what he sought was an understanding according to God's word, which is quite another thing. To understand spiritual things is the gift of God. To have a judgment enlightened by heavenly light and conformed to divine truth is a privilege which only grace can give. Many a man who is accounted wise after the manner of this world is a fool

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according to the word of the Lord. May we be among those happy children who shall all be taught of the Lord.

170. "*Let my supplication come before thee.*" It is the same entreaty with a slight change of words. He humbly calls his cry a supplication, a sort of beggar's petition; and again he asks for audience and for answer. There might be hindrances in the way to an audience, and he begs for their removal—let it come. Other believers are heard—let my prayer come before thee. "*Deliver me according to thy word.*" Rid me of mine adversaries, clear me of my slanderers, preserve me from my tempters, and bring me up out of all my afflictions, even as thy word has led me to expect thou wilt do. It is for this that he seeks understanding. His enemies would succeed through his folly, if they succeeded at all; but if he exercised a sound discretion they would be baffled, and he would escape from them. The Lord in answer to prayer frequently delivers his children by making them wise as serpents as well as harmless as doves.

171. "*My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.*" He will not always be pleading for himself, he will rise above all selfishness, and render thanks for the benefit received. He promises to praise God when he has obtained practical instruction in the life of godliness: this is something to praise for, no blessing is more precious. The best possible praise is that which proceeds from men who honour God, not only with their lips, but in their lives. We learn the music of heaven in the school of holy living. He whose life honours the Lord is sure to be a man of praise. David would not only be grateful in silence, but he would express that gratitude in appropriate terms: his lips would utter what his life had practised. Eminent disciples are wont to speak well of the master who instructed them, and this holy man, when taught the statutes of the Lord, promises to give all the glory to him to whom it is due.

172. "*My tongue shall speak of thy word.*" When he had done singing he began preaching. God's tender mercies are such that they may be either said or sung. When the tongue speaks of God's word it has a most fruitful subject; such speaking will be as a tree of life, whose leaves shall be for the healing of the people. Men will gather together to listen to such talk, and they will treasure it up in their hearts. The worst of us is that for the most part we are full of our own words, and speak but little of God's word. Oh, that we could come to the same resolve as this godly man, and say henceforth, "My tongue shall speak of thy word." Then should we break through our sinful silence; we should no more be cowardly and half-hearted, but should be true witnesses for Jesus. It is not only of God's works that we are to speak, but of his word. We may extol its truth, its wisdom, its preciousness, its grace, its power; and then we may tell of all it has revealed, all it has promised, all it has commanded, all it has effected. The subject gives us plenty of sea-room; we may speak on for ever: the tale is for ever telling, yet untold. "*For all thy commandments are righteousness.*" David appears to have been mainly enamoured of the preceptive part of the word of God, and concerning the precept his chief delight lay in its purity and excellence. When a man can speak this from his heart, his heart is indeed a temple of the Holy Ghost. He had said aforetime (verse 138), "Thy testimonies are righteous," but here he declares that they are righteousness itself. The law of God is not only the standard of right, but it is the essence of righteousness. This the Psalmist affirms of each and every one of the precepts without exception. He felt like Paul—"The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." When a man has so high an opinion of God's commandments it is little wonder that his lips should be ready to extol the ever-glorious One.

173. "*Let thine hand help me.*" Give me practical succour. Do not entrust me to my friends or thy friends, but put thine own hand to the work. Thy hand has both skill and power, readiness and force: display all these

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qualities on my behalf. I am willing to do the utmost that I am able to do; but what I need is thine help, and this is so urgently required that if I have it not I shall sink. Do not refuse thy succour. Great as thy hand is, let it light on me, even me. The prayer reminds us of Peter walking on the sea and beginning to sink; he, too, cried, "Lord, help me," and the hand of his Master was stretched out for his rescue. "*For I have chosen thy precepts.*" A good argument. A man may fitly ask help from God's hand when he has dedicated his own hand entirely to the obedience of the faith. "I have chosen thy precepts." His election was made, his mind was made up. In preference to all earthly rules and ways, in preference even to his own will, he had chosen to be obedient to the divine commands. Will not God help such a man in holy work and sacred service? Assuredly he will. If grace has given us the heart with which to will, it will also give us the hand with which to perform. Wherever, under the constraints of a divine call, we are engaged in any high and lofty enterprise, and feel it to be too much for our strength, we may always invoke the right hand of God in words like these.

174. "*I have longed for thy salvation, O* LORD." He speaks like old Jacob on his deathbed; indeed, all saints, both in prayer and in death, appear as one, in word, and deed, and mind. He knew God's salvation, and yet he longed for it; that is to say, he had experienced a share of it, and he was therefore led to expect something yet higher and more complete. There is a salvation yet to come, when we shall be clean delivered from the body of this death, set free from all the turmoil and trouble of this mortal life, raised above the temptations and assaults of Satan, and brought near unto our God, to be like him and with him for ever and ever. "I have longed for thy salvation, O Jehovah; *and thy law is my delight.*" The first clause tells us what the saint longs for, and this informs us what is his present satisfaction. God's law, contained in the ten commandments, gives joy to believers. God's law, that is, the entire Bible, is a well-spring of consolation and enjoyment to all who receive it. Though we have not yet reached the fulness of our salvation, yet we find in God's word so much concerning a present salvation that we are even now delighted.

175. "*Let my soul live.*" Fill it full of life, preserve it from wandering into the ways of death, give it to enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, let it live to the fulness of life, to the utmost possibilities of its new-created being. "*And it shall praise thee.*" It shall praise thee for life, for new life, for eternal life, for thou art the Lord and Giver of life. The more it shall live, the more it shall praise, and when it shall live in perfection it shall praise thee in perfection. Spiritual life is prayer and praise. "*And let thy judgments help me.*" While I read the record of what thou hast done, in terror or in love, let me be quickened and developed. While I see thy hand actually at work upon me, and upon others, chastening sin, and smiling upon righteousness, let me be helped both to live aright and to praise thee. Let all thy deeds in providence instruct me, and aid me in the struggle to overcome sin and to practise holiness. This is the second time he has asked for help in this portion; he was always in need of it, and so are we.

176. This is the *finale*, the conclusion of the whole matter: "*I have gone astray like a lost sheep*"—often, wilfully, wantonly, and even hopelessly, but for thine interposing grace. In times gone by, before I was afflicted, and before thou hadst fully taught me thy statutes, I went astray. "I went astray" from the practical precepts, from the instructive doctrines, and from the heavenly experiences which thou hadst set before me. I lost my road, and I lost myself. Even now I am apt to wander, and, in fact, have roamed already; therefore, Lord, restore me. "*Seek thy servant.*" He was not like a dog, that somehow or other can find its way back; but he was like a lost sheep, which goes further and further away from home; yet still he was a sheep, and the Lord's sheep, his property, and precious in his sight, and therefore

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he hoped to be sought in order to be restored. However far he might have wandered he was still not only a sheep, but God's "servant," and therefore he desired to be in his Master's house again, and once more honoured with commissions for his Lord. Had he been only a lost sheep he would not have prayed to be sought; but being also a "servant" he had the power to pray. He cries, "See thy servant," and he hopes to be not only sought, but forgiven, accepted, and taken into work again by his gracious Master.

Notice this confession; many times in the psalm David has defended his own innocence against foul-mouthed accusers, but when he comes into the presence of the Lord his God he is ready enough to confess his transgressions. He here sums up, not only his past, but even his present life, under the image of a sheep which has broken from its pasture, forsaken the flock, left the shepherd, and brought itself into the wild wilderness, where it has become as a lost thing. The sheep bleats, and David prays, "Seek thy servant." His argument is a forcible one,—"*for I do not forget thy commandments.*" I know the right, I approve and admire the right, what is more, I love the right, and long for it. I cannot be satisfied to continue in sin, I must be restored to the ways of righteousness. I have a home-sickness after my God, I pine after the ways of peace; I do not and I cannot forget thy commandments, nor cease to know that I am always happiest and safest when I scrupulously obey them, and find all my joy in doing so. Now, if the grace of God enables us to maintain in our hearts the loving memory of God's commandments it will surely yet restore us to practical holiness. That man cannot be utterly lost whose heart is still with God. If he be gone astray in many respects, yet still, if he be true in his soul's inmost desires, he will be found again, and fully restored. Yet let the reader remember the first verse of the psalm while he reads the last: the major blessedness lies not in being restored from wandering, but in being upheld in a blameless way even to the end. Be it ours to keep the crown of the causeway, never leaving the King's highway for By-path Meadow, or any other flowery path of sin. May the Lord uphold us even to the end. Yet even then we shall not be able to boast with the Pharisee, but shall still pray with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and with the Psalmist, "Seek thy servant."

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## NOTES ON VERSES 169 TO 176.

This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter *Tau*, corresponding to our *t*, or *th*.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 169.—"*Let my cry come near before thee, O* LORD." That is, as some will have it, Let this whole preceding psalm, and all the petitions (whereof we have here a repetition) therein contained, be highly accepted in heaven.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 169.—"*Let my cry come near before thee, O* LORD." We are now come to the last section of this psalm, wherein we see David more fervent in prayer than he was in the first, as ye shall easily observe by comparing them both together. The godly, the longer they speak to God, are the more fervent and earnest to speak to him; so that unless necessity compel them, they desire never to intermit conference with him.

Many prayers hath he made to God in this psalm: now in the end he prays for his prayers, that the Lord would let them come before him. Some men send out prayers, but God turns them into sin, and puts them away back from him: therefore David seeks favour to his prayers.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 169.—"*Give me understanding.*" This was the prayer of Solomon (1 Kings iii. 9), and we are told that it pleased the Lord, and as a reward he added temporal prosperity, which the young king had not asked. Yet Solomon meant less by his prayer than his father David did; for we see in him little trace of the deep devotion for which his father was so remarkable. The Psalmist here prays a deep prayer which can only be answered by the Holy Ghost himself enlightening the soul. The understanding is a most important member of our spiritual frame. Conscience is the understanding exercised upon moral questions, and if that be not right, where shall we be? Our understanding of the word of God comes by teaching, but also through experience: we understand hardly anything till we experience it. Such an enlightening experience is the gift of God, and to him we must look for it in prayer.—*C. H. S.*

*Verse* 169.—"*Give me understanding.*" The especial work of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our minds unto the understanding of the Scripture is called "*understanding.*" The Psalmist prays "*Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law*" (verse 34). So the apostle speaks to Timothy: "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things": 2 Tim. ii. 7. Besides his own consideration of what was proposed unto him, which includes the due and diligent use of all outward means, it was moreover necessary that God *should give him understanding* by an inward effectual work of his Spirit, that he might comprehend the things wherein he was instructed. And the desire hereof, as of that without which there can be no saving knowledge of the word, nor advantage by it, the Psalmist expresseth emphatically, with great fervency of spirit in verse 144: "The righteousness of thy testimony is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live." Without this he knew that he could have no benefit by the everlasting righteousness of the testimonies of God. All understanding, indeed, however it be abused by the most, is the work and effect of the Holy Ghost; for "the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding": Job xxxii. 8. So is this spiritual understanding in an especial manner the gift of God. In this "understanding" both the ability of our mind and the due exercise of it is included. This one consideration, that the saints of God have with so much earnestness prayed that God would *give them understanding* as to his mind and will as revealed in the word, with his reiterated promises that he would so do, is of more weight with me than all the disputes of men to the contrary. No farther argument is necessary to prove that men do not understand the mind of God in the Scripture in a

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due manner, than their supposal and confidence that so they can do without the communication of a spiritual understanding unto them by the Holy Spirit. This self-confidence is directly contrary unto the plain, express testimonies of the word.—*John Owen.*

*Verse* 169.—"*Give me understanding.*" Why should the man of God here pray for *understanding?* Had he not often prayed for it before? Was he a novice in knowledge, being a prophet? Doth not our Saviour Christ reprehend repetitions and babbling in prayer? True it is our Saviour Christ doth reprehend that babbling which is without faith and knowledge and a feeling of our wants; but he speaketh not against those serious repetitions which proceed from a plentiful knowledge, abundant faith, and lively feeling of our necessities. Again, although it cannot be denied but he was a man of God, and had received great grace, yet God giveth knowledge to his dearest saints in this life but in part, and the most which we see and know is but little. Besides, when we have knowledge, and knowledge must be brought into practice, we shall find such difficulties, such waywardness, such forgetfulness, such wants, that although we have had with the prophet a very good direction in the general things of the word, which are universal and few, yet we shall find many distractions in our practices, which must be particular and many; and we shall either fail in memory by forgetfulness, or in judgment by blindness, or in affection by dulness. So easily may we slip when we think we may hold our journey on. Wherefore the man of God, through that examination which he took of his heart and affections, seeing those manifold straits and difficulties, prayeth in the verse following, not for the renewing of men in general in their troubles, but for the considering of his own particular condition.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 169.—"*According to thy word.*" David here seeks understanding not carnally, for the wisdom of the flesh is death: but he seeks understanding *according to God's word.* Without this the wisdom of man is foolishness; and the more subtil he seems to be in his ways, the more deeply he involves himself in the snare of the devil. "They have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" Jer. viii. 9. But seeing he was an excellent prophet, and protested before that he had more understanding than the ancients, yea, than his teachers; how is it that he still prays for understanding? In answer to this we are to know, that there is a great difference between the gifts of nature and grace. Nature ofttimes gives to man very excellent gifts, as rare memory, knowledge, quick wit, strength, external beauty; but therewithal it teacheth not man to consider that in which he is wanting; whereof it comes to pass, that he waxeth proud of that which he hath. This is a common thing to men in the state of nature, that of small gifts they conceive a great pride: but grace, as it gives to man more excellent gifts than nature can afford, so it teacheth him to look unto that which he wants, that he be not puffed up by considering that which he hath, but carried in all humility of heart to pray for that which he wants.—*Abraham Wright.*

*Verse* 170.—"*Let my supplication come before thee,*" etc. The sincere worshipper cannot be contented with anything short of actual intercourse with God. The round of duty cannot please where the spirit of grace and supplication has not been vouchsafed. A filial disposition will pour itself forth in earnest longings after communion with God. Nor will the hope of gracious audience be founded on any other plea save that of the sure word of Jehovah's promise. It is in accordance with that word, and not in opposition to it, that the child of God expects to be heard. All his deliverance he feels to be from the Lord, and all that he looks for from heaven he anticipates in answer to prayer. O for more of that faith which makes its appeal to the divine veracity, and which looks with steadfast eye to the promise of a covenant-keeping God.—*John Morison.*

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*Verse* 170.—"*Let my supplication come before thee.*" Observe the order of the words here and in the preceding verse. First we had, "Let my cry come near;" then "Give me understanding," and that "according to thy word," and now we have "*Let my prayer enter in* (LXX., Syr., Arb., Vulg.,) *before thee.*" Just so, if you wish for an interview with a man of very high rank, first you come near his house, then you ask for information and instruction as to his intentions, then you ask permission to enter, lest you should be driven away and refused admittance. Knock therefore at the door of the heavenly palace: knock, not with your bodily hand, but with the right hand of prayer. For the voice can knock as well as the hand, as it is written, "It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh": Cant. v. 2. And when you have knocked, see how you go in, lest after entering you should not get the sight of the King. For there are many who make their way into palaces, and do not at once get an audience of an earthly sovereign, but have to watch constantly to obtain an interview at last. Nor have they the choice of the opportunity, they come when they are sent for, and then present their petition, if they wish to be favourably received.—*Ambrose, in Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 171.—"*My lips shall utter praise.*" You have stood at the fountain head of a stream of water, and admired while it bubbled up, and ran down in a clear little rivulet, till at length it swelled the mighty river. Such is the allusion here. The heart taught of God, cannot contain itself, but breaks out in praise and singing. This would be the effect of divine illumination, and this would be felt to be a privilege, yea, and a high duty. Have you not found so, believers, specially on communion occasions? Be assured, such utterances are the sign of a renewed heart; yea, of a heart filled with all gratitude of right feeling.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 171.—"*My lips shall utter praise,*" etc.

O make me, Lord, thy statutes learn!
Keep in thy ways my feet,
Then shall my lips divinely burn;
Then shall my songs be sweet.

Each sin I cast away shall make
My soul more strong to soar;
Each deed of holiness shall wake
A strain divine the more.

My voice shall more delight thine ear
The more I wait on thee;
Thy service bring my song more near
The angelic harmony.

*T. H. Gill, in "Breathings of the Better Life"* [1881].

*Verse* 172.—"*My tongue shall speak of thy word.*" One duty of thankfulness promised by David is, *to speak of God's words* for the edification of others. Every Christian man, as he is a priest to offer sacrifice unto God, so is he a prophet to teach his brethren; for unto us all stands that commandment, "Edify one another in their most holy faith." But, alas, ye shall see many Christians now, who at their tables, and in their companies, can speak freely upon any subject; only for spiritual matters, which concern the soul, there they are dumb, and cannot say with David, "*My tongue shall speak of thy word.*"—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 173.—"*Let thine hand help me.*" David having before made promises of thankfulness, seeks now help from God, that he may perform them. Our sufficiency is not of ourselves, but of God; to will and to do are both from him. In temporal things men ofttimes take great pains with small profit; first, because they seek not to make their conscience good; next, because they seek not help from God: therefore they speed no better than

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Peter, who fished all night and got nothing till he cast his net in the name of the Lord. But in spiritual things we may far less look to prosper, if we call not for God's assistance: the means will not profit us unless God's blessing accompany them. There is preaching, but for the most part without profit; there is prayer, but it prevails not; there is hearing of the word, but without edifying; and all because in spiritual exercises instant prayer is not made unto God, that his hand may be with us to help us.—*Abraham Wright.*

*Verse* 173.—"*I have chosen thy precepts.*" Hath God given you a heart to make choice of his ways? O bless God! There was a time when you went on in giving pleasure to the flesh, and you saw then no better thing than such a kind of life, and the Lord hath been pleased to discover better things to you, so as to make you renounce your former ways, and to make choice of another way, in which your souls have found other manner of comforts, and satisfactions, and contentments than ever you did before. Bless God as David did: "Blessed be the Lord who hath given me counsel" . . . . Seeing God hath thus inclined your heart to himself, be for ever established in your *choice:* seeing God hath shown to you his ways, as Pilate said in another case, "That I have written I have written": so say you, "That I have chosen I have chosen."—*Jeremiah Burroughs, in "Moses his Choice."*

*Verses* 173, 174.—"*I have chosen.*" "*My delight.*" Cheerfulness accompanies election of a thing. Lumpishness is a sign we never chose it, but were forced to it. Such cheerfulness in service procures cheerfulness in mercies: Isai. lxiv. 5, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness." He puts to his hand to help such an one. Christ loves not melancholy and phlegmatic service; such a temper in acts of obedience is a disgrace to God and to religion: to God, it betrays us to have jealous thoughts of God, as though he were a hard master; to religion, it makes others think duties are drudgeries, and not privileges.—*Stephen Charnock.*

*Verse* 174.—"*I have longed for thy salvation, O* LORD," etc. The thing which we learn hence out of David's joining these two together, *I long for salvation*, and *thy law is my delight*, is this, that it is not enough for a man to say, he longs and desires to be saved, unless he makes a conscience to use the appointed means to bring him thereunto. It had been but hypocrisy in David to say he longed for salvation, if his conscience had not been able to witness with him that *the law was his delight.* It is mere mockery for a man to say he longeth for bread, and prayeth to God every day to give him his daily bread, if he yet walk in no calling, or else seek to get it by fraud and rapine, not staying himself at all upon God's providence. Who will imagine that a man wisheth for health, who either despiseth or neglecteth the means of his recovery? God hath in his own wisdom appointed a lawful means for every lawful thing; this means, being obediently used, the comfortable obtaining of the end may be confidently looked for; the means being not observed, to think to attain to the end is mere presumption. God will deliver Noah from the flood, but Noah must be "*moved with reverence,*" and "*prepare the ark*" (Heb. xi. 7), or else he could not have escaped. He would save Lot from Sodom, but yet Lot must hie him out quickly, and not look behind him till he have entered Zoar: Gen. xix. 17. He was pleased to cure Hezekiah of the plague, but yet Hezekiah must take "a lump of figs, and lay it upon his boil:" Isai. xxxviii. 21. He vouchsafed to preserve Paul and company at sea, yet the sailors must "abide in the ship," else ye cannot be saved, saith Paul: Acts xxvii. 31.—*Samuel Hieron,* 1572—1617.

*Verse* 174.—"*I have longed for thy salvation.*" It is God's salvation proper that he must desire—"*thy salvation*"—for nothing else could satisfy his pure mind—perfect peace with God, perfect purity and perfect hope. Now, if you ask what was God's way of delivering, and what was his way of salvation, the answer is, it was set forth in his word, and was what the Psalmist calls

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his "*law.*" God's salvation and his law were discerned to be one. "*I have longed for thy salvation, O* LORD; *and thy law is my delight.*"—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 174.—"*I have longed for thy salvation, O* LORD." "*Salvation,*" by the "hand," or arm of Jehovah, (which is often in Scripture a title of Messiah,) hath been the object of the hopes, the desires, and "longing" expectations of the faithful, from Adam to this hour, and will continue so to be until he, who hath already visited us in great humility, shall come again in glorious majesty to complete our redemption and take us to himself. —*George Horne.*

*Verse* 174.—"*I have longed for thy salvation, O* LORD." For a present salvation from the guilt and power of sin, and for future salvation, in the full and everlasting enjoyment of God in heaven. David had the happiness to be a partaker, both of pardoning mercy and of sanctifying grace; yet still he longed for more of this salvation, that is, for a more assured faith of pardoning mercy, and larger measures of sanctifying grace. A gracious soul is insatiable; the more it hath received, the more it desires to receive. Enjoyment, instead of surfeiting, sharpens the appetite. Nay, so sweet is the relishing of spiritual things, that every renewed taste of them quenches the thirst for other things.

"*Thy law is my delight.*" Here David chooses the term "*law*" for denoting the whole revelation of God's will, to remind us of the inseparable connexion between privilege and duty, faith and obedience, holiness and comfort; and to teach us that we ought to be thankful to God for the direction he hath given us in the road to heaven, no less than for the promises by which we are assured of the possession of it.—*Robert Walker,* 1716—1783.

*Verse* 174.—"*Thy law is my delight.*" Religion will decay or flourish, as it is our *duty* or our *delight.* The mind is incapable of continued exertion *for duty;* but it readily falls in *with* "*delight.*" Thus our duties become our privileges, while Christ is their source and life. Every step of progress is progress in happiness. This verse (of which experience is the best interpreter) is the believer's language in his lively, as well as in his fainting state. For the more he knows and enjoys of the divine presence, the more he longs to know and enjoy it.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 174.—"*Delight,*" in the plural, "*delights,*" as in verses 24, 77, 92, 143. God's word is an abundant source of pleasure to his people.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 175.—'*Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee,*" etc. This verse containeth three things, 1st, David's petition for life: "*Let my soul live.*" "*My soul;*" that is, myself: the soul is put for the whole man. The contrary: "Let me die with the Philistines," said Samson (Judges xxi. 30); Hebrew, margin, "Let my soul die." His life was sought after by the cruelty of his enemies; and he desireth God to keep him alive.

2ndly, His argument from the aim of his life; "*And it shall praise thee.*" The glorifying of God was his aim. The fruit of all God's benefits is to profit us, and praise God. David professeth that all the days of his life he would live in the sense and acknowledgment of such a benefit.

3rdly, The ground of his hope and confidence in the last clause: "*And let thy judgments help me.*" Our hopes of help are grounded on God's judgments, whereby is meant his word. There are judgments decreed, and judgments executed; doctrinal judgments, and providential judgments. That place intimateth the distinction: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil:" Eccl. viii. 11. There is *sententia lata et dilata.* Here God's judgments are put for the sentence pronounced; and chiefly for one part of them, the promises of grace. As also, "I have hoped in thy judgments:" Ps. cxix. 43. Promises are the objects of hope.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 175.—"*Let my soul live.*" What is the life that the Psalmist is now

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praying for, but the salvation for which he had just expressed his longing? The taste that he has received makes him hunger for a higher and more continued enjoyment—not for selfish gratification, but that he might employ himself in the praise of his God. Indeed, as we have drawn towards the close of this Psalm, we cannot but have observed that character of praise to pervade his experience, which has been generally remarked in the concluding Psalms of this sacred book. Much do we lose of spiritual strength for want of occupying ourselves more in the exercise of praise.—*Charles Bridges.*

*Verse* 175.—"*Live and praise.*" The saint improves his earthly things for an heavenly end. Where layest thou up thy treasure? Dost thou bestow it on thy voluptuous appetite, thy hawks and thy hounds; or lockest thou it up in the bosom of Christ's poor members? What use makest thou of thy honour and greatness? To strengthen the hands of the godly or the wicked? And so of all thy other temporal enjoyments. A gracious heart improves them for God; when a saint prays for these things, he hath an eye to some heavenly end. If David prays for life, it is not that he may live, but "*live and praise God.*" When he was driven from his regal throne by the rebellious arms of Absalom, see what his desire and hope were, 2 Sam. xv. 25: "The king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation." Mark, not shew me my crown, my palace, but the ark, the house of God.—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse* 175.—"*Live and praise.*" Liveliness of soul is the Spirit's gift, and it will show itself in abounding praises.—*Henry Law.*

*Verse* 175.—"*Let thy judgments help me.*" In the second clause it would be harsh to understand the word "*judgments*" of the commandments, to which it does not properly belong to give help. It seems, then, that the prophet, perceiving himself liable to numberless calamities—even as the faithful, by reason of the unbridled license of the wicked, dwell in this world as sheep among wolves,—calls upon God to protect him in the way of restraining, by his secret providence, the wicked from doing him harm. It is a very profitable doctrine, when things in the world are in a state of great confusion, and when our safety is in danger amid so many and varied storms, to lift up our eyes to the judgments of God, and to seek a remedy in them.—*John Calvin.*

*Verses* 175, 176.—

> Though like a sheep estranged I stray,
> Yet have I not renounced thy way.
> Thine hand extend; thine own reclaim;
> Grant me to live, and praise thy name.—
>
> *Richard Mant.*

*Verse* 176.—"*I have gone astray like a lost sheep.*" Though a sheep go astray, yet it is soon called back by the voice of the shepherd: "My sheep hear my voice." Thus David when he went against Nabal was called back by the Lord's voice in a woman; and when he had slain Uriah he was brought again by Nathan. And therefore if we will be sheep, then though we sometimes go astray, yet we must be easily reclaimed.—*Richard Greenham.*

*Verse* 176.—"*I have gone astray like a lost sheep,*" driven out by storm, or dark day, or by the hunting of the dogs chased out from the rest of the flock.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 176.—"*I have gone astray like a lost sheep,*" etc. And this is all the conclusion—"*a lost sheep*"! This long psalm of ascriptions, praises, avowals, resolves, high hopes, ends in this, that he is a perishing sheep. But, stay, there is hope—"*Seek thy servant.*" "*I have gone astray like a lost sheep.*" The original is of the most extensive range, comprehending all time past, and also the habitual tendencies of the man. The believer feels that



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he had gone astray when the grace of God found him; that he had gone astray many times, had not the grace of God prevented it. He feels that he went astray on such and such unhappy occasions. He also feels that he hath gone astray in all that he hath done; and indeed that he is astray now. But the word expresses the habitual tendency likewise—I go astray like a lost sheep, and this rendering is in keeping with the prayer, "*Seek thy servant.*" The third member is also properly rendered in keeping with it: "I go astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments." All this is descriptive of the remaining corruption that is in the believer. He is not unmindful of the Lord; he has the root of the matter in him, the seed of divine life; yet he does go astray; whence the necessity of the prayer: "*Seek thy servant.*" Isaiah's description of men, although conveyed in the same terms, is evidently more sweeping, as the context words show: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." This would seem to apply to the race of man. Rather is the experience of the Psalmist similar to that described by the apostle Paul: "I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." And the Psalmist had the same remedy at the early period, as had the apostle in the later times; for God's salvation is one. The Psalmist's remedy was, "*Seek thy servant;*" the apostle's, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—*John Stephen.*

*Verse* 176.—"*I have gone astray.*" The original word signifies either the turning of the foot, or the turning of the heart, or both, out of the way. "*I have gone astray like a lost sheep;*" that is, I have been deceived, and so have gone out of the way of thy holy commandments. Satan is an ill guide, and our hearts are no better: he that follows either, quickly loseth himself; and until God seeketh us (as David prays in the next words), we cannot find our way when we are once out of it.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse* 176.—"*I have gone astray.*" Gotthold one day saw a farmer carefully counting his sheep as they came from the field. Happening at the time to be in an anxious and sorrowful mood, he gave vent to his feelings and said: Why art thou cast down, my soul? and why disquieted with vexing thoughts? Surely thou must be dear to the Most High as his lambs are to this farmer. Art thou not better than many sheep? Is not Jesus Christ thy shepherd? Has not he risked his blood and life for thee? Hast thou no interest in his words: "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand"? John x. 28. This man is numbering his flock; and thinkest thou that God does not also count and care for his believing children and elect, especially as his beloved Son has averred, that the very hairs of our head are all numbered? Matt. x. 30. During the day, I may perhaps have gone out of the way, and heedlessly followed my own devices; still, at the approach of evening, when the faithful Shepherd counts his lambs, he will mark my absence, and graciously seek and bring me back. Lord Jesus, "*I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.*"—*Christian Scriver* (1629—1693), *in Gotthold's Emblems.*

*Verse* 176.—"*I have gone astray,*" etc. Who is called "the man after God's own heart"? David, the Hebrew king, had fallen into sins enough—blackest crimes—there was no want of sin. And, therefore, unbelievers sneer, and ask, "Is this your man after God's own heart?" The sneer, it seems to me, is but a shallow one. What are faults, what are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, the often-baffled, never-ended struggle of it, be forgotten? . . . . David's life and

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history, as written for us in those psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given us of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discover in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul towards what is good and best. Struggle often baffled—sore baffled—driven as into entire wreck; yet a struggle never ended, ever with tears, repentance, true unconquerable purpose begun anew.—*Thomas Carlyle*, (1795—1881), *in* "*Heroes and Hero-Worship.*"

*Verse* 176.—"*For I do not forget thy commandments.*" In all my wandering; with my consciousness of error; with my sense of guilt; I still *do* feel that I love thy law, thy service, thy commandments. They are the joy of my heart, and I desire to be recalled from all my wanderings, that I may find perfect happiness in thee and in thy service evermore. Such is the earnest wish of every regenerated heart. For as such a one may have wandered from God, yet he is conscious of true attachment to him and his service; he desires and earnestly prays that he may be "sought out," brought back, and kept from wandering any more.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 176.—"*For I do not forget thy commandments.*" The godly never so fall but there remains in them some grace, which reserves a hope of medicine to cure them: so David here. Albeit he transgressed some of God's commandments, yet he fell not into any full oblivion of them.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse* 176.—I do not think that there could possibly be a more appropriate conclusion of such a Psalm as this, so full of the varied experience and the ever-changing frames and feelings even of a child of God, in the sunshine and the cloud, in the calm and in the storm, than this ever-clinging sense of his propensity to wander, and the expression of his utter inability to find his way back without the Lord's guiding hand to restore him; and at the same time with it all, his fixed and abiding determination never to forget the Lord's commandments. What an insight into our poor wayward hearts does this verse give us—not merely liable to wander, but ever wandering, ever losing our way, ever stumbling on the dark mountains, even while cleaving to God's commandments! But at the same time what a prayer does it put into our mouths, "*Seek thy servant,*"—"I am thine, save me." Yes, blessed be God! there is One mighty to save. "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."—*Barton Bouchier.*

As far as I have been able, as far as I have been aided by the Lord, I have treated throughout, and expounded, this great Psalm. A task which more able and learned expositors have performed, or will perform better; nevertheless, my services were not to be withheld from it on that account, when my brethren earnestly required it of me.—*Augustine.*

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## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

OUTLINES UPON KEYWORDS OF THE PSALM, BY C. A. DAVIS, OF BRADFORD.

*A good memory.*—I. What it should retain: God's "*name*" (ver. 55); God's "*word*" (ver. 16); God's "*law*" (ver. 109). The law is dilated upon under various names, "*statutes*" (ver. 83); "*precepts*" (ver. 141); "*commandments*" (ver. 176); "*judgments*" (ver. 52). II. How its retentive power may be fostered. By effort of will (ver. 16; 93). By delight in the theme (ver. 16). By a consideration of blessings received (ver. 93). III. Hindrances that must be overcome. Such as arise from severe affliction (ver. 83): from personal danger (ver. 109); and from insignificance and relative contempt (ver. 141). IV. Reasons for its cultivation. Former blessings derived (ver. 93). It furnishes ground of appeal to God (ver. 153; 176). V. The good that will spring from it. Consistent fidelity (ver. 55); or, if necessary, restoration from backsliding (ver. 176). Divine consideration (ver. 153); comfort (ver. 52); delight (ver. 16). And now the believer may appeal to the remembrance of God (ver. 49).

*The believer in affliction.*—I. His distress (ver. 92). II. His support (ver. 92). III. His submission (ver. 75). IV. His prayer (ver. 107; 153). V. Its answer (ver. 50). VI. His review (ver. 71).

*Spiritual understanding.*—I. Is the gift of God. Jehovah (the only wise), 169. Creator (who has endowed us with our other faculties, therefore with this), 73. Master (who allots our service and therefore our qualification), 125. II. Must be sought from God. With deep sense of need, 169. With faith, 169. With perseverance and importunity, 27, 34, 73, 125, 144, 169. III. Pleas to be used in the prayer for understanding. That I may *learn*, 73, and *know* thy commandments, 125. That thus I may live, 144. Hating every false way, 104. Rendering whole-hearted obedience, 34, and engaging in godly conversation, 27. IV. When obtained it must be improved by exercise in the Word of God. The entrance of the word into the heart is its dawn, 130. It increases by meditation in the word, 99. Is brought to perfection by faithful observance of the precepts of the word, 100. John vii. 17.

*The Ten Titles of the Word of God.*—"Way" (ver. 1, etc.). "Law" (ver. 1). "Testimonies" (ver. 2). "Precepts" (ver. 4). "Statutes" (ver. 5). "Commandments" (ver. 6). "Judgments" (ver. 7). "Word" (ver. 9). "Truth" (ver. 30). "Righteousness" (ver. 40).

Show the particular shade of meaning in each of these titles, and the light they cast on the divine law and on the duty of the believer.

*Holy meditation.*—I. Its theme: The revealed will of God in its varied aspects; *i.e.* "precepts"; "statutes"; "law"; "testimonies"; "word." II. The spirit which prompts it: Love (vers. 48 and 97). Love to God will induce meditation. Neglect of meditation argues want of love. III. Its times: By "day" (ver. 97). By "night" (ver. 148); when maltreated by the world (ver. 78); when falsely accused (ver. 23). IV. Its results: A holy walk (ver. 15). Proficiency in understanding (ver. 99). Support in trial (ver. 23, 78).

If you would gladden your nights and days and your times of trial, if you would excel in heavenly wisdom, and hallow your life, abundantly occupy yourself with sacred meditation.

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THE PSALM TREATED IN ITS SECTIONS, BY C. A. DAVIS.

The subject of each portion is indicated in its first verse. Each section may serve as the subject for a discourse.

*Verses* 1—8.—*The undefiled;* described, in vers. 1—3. Such a life commanded by God is prayed for in ver. 5, and with its attendant happiness is anticipated in ver. 6—7, and resolved upon in ver. 8.

*Verses* 9—16.—*Sanctification by the word*, declared generally (ver. 9); sought personally (ver. 10—12); published to others (ver. 13); personally rejoiced in (ver. 14—16).

*Verses* 17—24.—*Divine bounties desired.* Life, for godly service (ver. 17). Illumination (ver. 18). Guidance homeward for the stranger ("thy commandments") (ver. 19—20), and, glancing at the proud who err from this guidance (ver. 21), the Psalmist prays for removal of the "reproach" entailed by fidelity to God (ver. 22—24).

*Verses* 25—32.—*Quickening.* Prayed for with confession (ver. 25, 26). When obtained shall be talked of (ver. 27). Desired for the sake of strength (ver. 28), of truthfulness (ver. 29—31), and of activity (ver. 32).

*Verses* 33—40.—*Faithfulness secured by divine inworking.* Prayer for divine teaching, understanding, constraint, and control of heart and eyes, to ensure persevering and whole-hearted faithfulness (ver. 33—37). The Psalmist, thus established in the word, prays for the establishment of the word to himself (ver. 38); deprecates the reproach of unfaithfulness (ver. 39); and enforces the whole prayer by the vehemence of the desire which prompts it (ver. 40).

*Verses* 41—48.—*Promised mercies.* Desired (ver. 41), as an answer to "him that reproacheth" (ver. 42, 43); as a means of faithfulness (ver. 44); liberty (ver. 45); boldness (ver. 46); delight (ver. 47), and eager longing (ver. 48).

*Verses* 49—56.—*Hope in affliction.* It arises from God's word (ver. 49). It produces comfort (ver. 50), even in trouble caused by the wicked (ver. 51—53). It gladdens the believer's pilgrimage and his holy night-seasons (ver. 54—56).

*Verses* 57—64.—*The believer's portion.* The Lord is the believer's portion (ver. 57); heartily sought (ver. 58—60); remaining though all else be taken away (ver. 61); causing joy even at midnight (ver. 62, and the selection of congenial company (ver. 63,64).

*Verses* 65—72.—*The Lord's dealings.* Gratefully acknowledged (ver. 65), and their instructiveness still desired (ver. 66), even affliction from him is "good" (ver. 67, 68), and with its beneficial result is preferred to the prosperity of the wicked (ver. 69—72).

*Verses* 73—80.—*Natural and spiritual creation.* The Psalmist prays to the Creator for spiritual life or "understanding" (ver. 73), he will then be welcomed by the spiritual (ver. 74). He submissively receives affliction for spiritual training (vers. 75—77), deprecates the hostility of the proud (ver. 78), craves the company of the spiritual (ver. 79), and prays for heartsoundness (ver. 80).

*Verses* 81—88.—*Hope in depression.* In the depression arising from mortal frailness (ver. 81—84), and from unjust persecution (ver. 85—87), the word of God is the source of joy and comfort.

*Verses* 89—96.—*The immutable word of God.* Is enthroned in heaven (ver. 89), and on earth (ver. 90, 91), is the salvation of the believer in affliction (ver. 92—94), his resource in danger (ver. 95), and the embodiment of perfection (ver. 96).

*Verses* 97—104.—*The profitableness of holy meditation.* Its theme—"thy law" (ver. 97), its effect—"wisdom" (ver. 98—100), practically shown in daily life (ver. 101, 102), its sweetness (ver. 103), and hallowing influence (ver. 104).

*Verses* 105—112.—*The word a lamp.* For guidance (ver. 105, 106). For

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life in affliction (ver. 107). For preservation in peril of enemies (ver. 109, 110). For joy of heart (ver. 111, 112).

*Verses* 113—120.—*Vain thoughts contrasted with God's law.* The believer takes sides (ver. 113—115); prays for upholding in the law (ver. 116, 117); contemplates the fate of the followers of vain thoughts (ver. 118, 119); and expresses the godly fear thereby inspired (ver. 120).

*Verses* 121—128.—*The just man's prayer against injustice.* Out of the prison of oppression he appeals to God to be his surety (ver. 121, 122); utters his weary longing for deliverance (ver. 123—125); points to the "time" (ver. 126); and professes his supreme love for God's law in contrast to the oppressors' contempt of it (ver. 127, 128).

*Verses* 129—136.—*The wonderfulness of God's testimonies.* Declared (ver. 129), instanced as light-giving (ver. 130), pantingly longed for (ver. 131). An appeal for divine ordering in the word (ver. 132—135). Grief at its rejection by others (ver. 136).

*Verses* 137—144.—*The righteousness of God and his word.* Declared (ver. 137, 138). Indignation at the forgetfulness of the enemies (ver. 139). The purity of the word (ver. 140, 141). This righteousness of God and of his testimonies is everlasting (ver. 142—144).

*Verses* 145—152.—*The believer's cry.* The reiterated cry (ver. 145—148). An appeal for audience (ver. 149). The nearness of the enemy perceived (ver. 150). But, in response to the cry, God is also near (ver. 151).

*Verses* 153—160.—*Divine consideration besought.* "Consider my affliction" (ver. 153); my cause (ver. 154); "for thy mercies' sake" (ver. 156). Consider my persecutors (ver. 157—158), and my love to thy precepts (ver. 160), and act accordingly.

*Verses* 161—168.—*What the word is to the believer.* The object of awe (ver. 161), joy (ver. 162), love (ver. 163), praise (ver. 164), the producer of peace (ver. 165), and hope (ver. 166); therefore exceedingly loved (ver. 167), and faithfully kept (ver. 168).

*Verses* 169—176.—*The concluding cry.* Bespeaking audience for his cry, the Psalmist asks for understanding and deliverance (ver. 169, 170); promises to praise God (ver. 171), and to speak of God (ver. 172), and again cries for help (ver. 173), salvation (ver. 174), life (ver. 175), and restoration (ver. 176).

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## NOTES ON SEPARATE VERSES.

*Verse* 1.—"*Blessed.*" True blessedness lies in—I. Defilement avoided by the word. II. Delight experienced in the word.

*Verse* 1.—Spiritual pedestrians are often mentioned in this psalm. Model travellers are described in this passage. Observe,—I. *Their Character:* "Undefiled." They are so (1) *in Christ:* found in him; complete; accepted. They are so (2) *by Christ:* His spirit, truth, and grace are in them. "Chosen generation," "peculiar people." II. *Their path:* "the law of the Lord." This path is (1) *Conspicuous*—high, visible, distinguished from every other. (2) *Ancient.* The old path. Holiness is older than sin, wisdom than folly, life than death, joy than sorrow. (3) *Safe.* Christ has repaired it. Apart from his work none can pass safely over. He has brought down mountains, raised up valleys, made crooked places straight, and rough places smooth. He has driven away the lion. (4) *Narrow.* It has a fence of commands on one side, and of prohibitions on the other. It is entered by a strait gate, which renders it necessary for the great to become as little children. III. *Their progress:* "walk." Not only talk, but step in the footprints of Jesus. Follow the law-fulfiller. They proceed in the exercise of his graces, in the exhibition of his virtues, in the fulfilment of his injunctions, and in the enjoyment of his favours. IV. *Their happiness:* "Blessed." They have unfailing help, suitable company, animating prospects on the way.—*W. Jackson, of Waltham Abbey*, 1882.

*Verses* 1, 2, 3.—I. Positive and Negative Beatitudes of Being.—II. Six Conditions of Peace with God. 1. Purity. 2. Obedience. 3. Fidelity. 4. Seeking. 5. Integrity. 6. Following.—*William Durban, of Chester*, 1882.

*Verse* 2.—"*Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.*" I. *The sacred Quest:* "Seek him." He has been sought among the trees, the hills, the planets, the stars. He has been sought in his own defaced image, man. He has been sought amid the mysterious wheels of Providence. But these quests have often been prompted simply by intellect, or compelled by conscience, and have therefore resulted but in a cold faint light. He has been sought in the word which this psalm so highly extols, when it has led up the smoke-covered and gleaming peaks of Sinai. It has been followed, when it has led beneath the olives of Gethsemane to witness a mysterious struggle in blood-sweating and anguish; to Calvary, where, in the place of a skull, life and immortality are brought to light. The sacred quest but there begins. II. *The Conduct of the Quest.* Seekers might be mistakenly dejected by so literal an interpretation of the "whole heart." We do not hesitate to say a stream is in its whole volume flowing towards sea while there are little side creeks in which the water eddies backward; or to say the tide is coming despite receding waves; or that spring is upon us despite hail-storm and biting wind. Indication of, 1. Unity 2. Intensity. 3. Determination. No one conducts this quest aright who is not prompted to or sustained in it by the gracious Spirit. III. *Blessedness both in the pursuit and issue.* 1. Blessedness in the bitterness of penitence. The door-handle touched by him drops of myrrh. The rising sun sends kindling beams upon the highest peaks. 2. Blessedness in the gladsome findings of salvation and adoption. 3. Blessedness in the perpetual pursuit. —*William Anderson, of Reading*, 1882.

*Verse* 2.—The double blessing. I. On keeping the testimonies. II. On seeking the Lord.

*Verse* 2.—"*That seek him with the whole heart.*" I. Seek what? God himself. No peace until he is found. II. Seek where? In his testimonies. 1. By studying them. 2. By keeping to them. III. Seek how? With the whole heart.—*George Rogers.*

*Verse* 2.—*Seeking for God.* I. The Psalmist's way of seeking God. 1. He sought God *with the heart.* Only the heart can find God. Sight fails.

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"The scientific method" fails. All reason fails. Only love and trust can succeed. Love sees much where all other perception finds nothing. Faith generally goes with discovery, and nowhere so much as in finding God. 2. He sought God *with all his heart*. (1) Half-heartedness seldom finds anything worth having. (2) Half-heartedness shows contempt for God. (3) God will not reveal himself to half-heartedness. It would be putting the highest premium possible upon indifference. II. The Psalmist's plea in seeking God: "Let me not wander from thy commandments." 1. God's commandments lead, presently, into his own presence. If we take even the moral law, every one of the ten commandments leads away from the world, and sin, into that seclusion of holiness in which he hides. It is thus with all the commandments of the Scriptures. 2. The earnestness of the soul's search for God becomes, in itself, a plea with God that he will be found of us. God, who loves importunity in prayer, loves it no less when it takes the form of searching with all the heart. He who seeks with all the heart finds special encouragement to pray: "Let me not wander from thy commandments."—*F. G. Marchant.*

*Verse* 2.—"*That seek him.*" We must remember six conditions required in them who would seek the Lord rightly. I. We must seek him in Christ the Mediator. John xiv. 6. II. We must seek him in truth. Jer. x. 10; John iv. 24; Ps. vii. 6. III. We must seek him in holiness. 2 Tim. ii. 19; Heb. xii. 14; 1 John iii. IV. We must seek him above all things and for himself. V. We must seek him by the light of his own word. VI. We must seek him diligently and with perseverance, never resting till we find him, with the spouse in the Canticles.—*William Cowper.*

*Verses* 2, 4, 5, 8.—"Blessed are they that *keep*." "Thou hast commanded us to *keep*." "O that my ways were directed to *keep*." "I will *keep*." The blessedness of *keeping* God's precepts—displayed (2), commanded (4), prayed for (5), resolved upon (8).—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 3.—"*They also do no iniquity.*" They work no iniquity with—1. Purpose of heart; 2. Delight; 3. Perseverance; 4. Nor at all when the heart is fully sanctified unto God; Christ dwelling in it by faith, and casting out sin.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 3.—The relation between negative and positive virtue. Or walking with God the best preventive of iniquity.

*Verse* 4.—I. Take notice of the law-giver: "Thou." Not thy equal, or one that will be baffled, but the great God. II. He hath interposed his authority: "hast commanded." III. The nature of this obedience, or the thing commanded: "To keep thy precepts."—*T. Manton.*

*Verse* 4.—*The supplementary commandment.* God having ordained the moral law, supplements it with a commandment prescribing the manner of keeping it. Hence: I. God is not indifferent to men's treatment of his law—whether they observe, neglect, or defy it. II. When observed, God discriminates the spirit of its observance, whether slavish, partial, careless, or diligent. III. There is but one spirit of obedience which satisfies God's requirement. "Diligently" implies an obedience which is,—careful to ascertain the law—prompt to fulfil it (ver. 60)—unreserved—love-inspired ("diligently," old meaning, through the Latin, "lovingly," ver. 47, 97, 113). IV. Does our obedience come up to this standard?—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 4.—Not only is service commanded, but the manner of it. Heartiness, care, perseverance required, because without these it will not be true, uniform, or victorious over difficulty.

*Verse* 4.—How to obey: "*Diligently.*" 1. Not partially, but fully. 2. Not doubtfully, but confidently. 3. Not reluctantly, but readily. 4. Not slovenly, but carefully. 5. Not coldly, but earnestly. 6. Not fitfully, but regularly.—*W. J.*

*Verses* 4, 5, 6.—A willing recognition (ver. 4). An ardent aspiration (ver. 5). A happy consequence (ver. 6).—*W. D.*

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*Verse* 5.—The prayer of the gracious. I. Suggested by each preceding clause of blessing. II. By a consciousness of failure. III. By a loving clinging to the Lord.

*Verse* 5.—I. The end desired: "To keep thy statutes." Not to be safe merely, or happy, but holy. II. The help implored. 1. To understand the divine precepts. 2. To keep them.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 5.—Longing to obey. 1. *It is a noble aspiration.* There is nothing grander than the desire to do this except the doing of it. 2. *It is a spiritual aspiration.* Not the offspring of our carnal nature. It is the heart of God in the new creature. 3. *It is a practicable aspiration.* We sometimes sigh for the impossible. But this may be attained by divine grace. 4. *It is an intense aspiration.* It is the Oh of a burning wish. 5. *It is an influential aspiration.* It does not evaporate in sighs. It is a mighty incentive implanted by grace which will not let us rest without holiness.—*W. J.*

*Verse* 6.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1443: "A Clear Conscience."

*Verse* 6.—Holy confidence the offspring of universal obedience.

*Verse* 6.—*The armour of proof.* I. Universal obedience will give unabashed confidence—1. Before the criticising world. 2. In the court of conscience. 3. At the throne of grace. 4. In the day of judgment. II. But our obedience is far from universal, and leaves us open to—1. The world's shafts. 2. The rebukes of conscience. 3. It paralyses our prayers, and, 4. It dares not appear for us at the bar of God. III. Then let us by faith wrap ourselves in the perfect righteousness of Christ. Our answer to the world's cavil. We are not faultless, and for salvation we rest wholly on another. This righteousness is—1. The salve of our wounded conscience. 2. Our mighty plea in prayer. 3. Our triumphant vindication in the judgment day.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 6.—Topic:—Self-respect depends on respect for one greater than self.—*W. D.*

*Verse* 7.—The best of praise, the best of learning, the best of blendings, viz., praise and holiness.

*Verse* 7.—I. The professor of sacred music: "I will praise." II. The subject of his song: "Thee." III. The instrument: "Heart." IV. The instrument tuned: "Uprightness of heart." V. The musician's training academy: "Judgments."—*W. D.*

*Verse* 7.—Learning and praising. I. They are *two spiritual exercises.* It is possible for learners and singers to be carnal and sensual; but in this case they are employed about the righteous ends, works, and ways of the Lord. II. They are *two appropriate exercises.* What can be more seemly than to learn of God and to praise him? III. They are *two profitable exercises.* The expectations of the most utilitarian are surpassed. The pleasure and the profit yield abundant reward. Heart, head, life are all benefited. IV. They are *two mutually-assisting exercises.* In the one we are receptive, and in the other communicative. By the one we are fitted to do the other. By the former we are stimulated to do the latter. How wonderfully the lesson is turned into a song, and the learner into a singer.—*W. J.*

*Verse* 7.—I. Deficiency confessed: "When I shall have learned." This is essential to growth. It is an admission all can truly make. II. Progress anticipated. He gave his heart to the work of learning. He sought divine help. III. Praise promised. He promised it to God alone. He vowed it should be sincere: "with upright heart.—*W. Williams, of Lambeth,* 1882.

*Verse* 8.—I. A hopeful resolve for life. II. A dreadful fear. III. A series of considerations removing the fear.

*Verse* 8.—I. The resolution: "I will keep," etc. II. The petition: "O forsake me not utterly." 1. Filial submission. I deserve it occasionally. 2. Filial confidence. "Not utterly." III. The connection between the two. Obedience without prayer and prayer without obedience are equally in vain. To make headway both oars must be applied. God cannot abide lazy beggars, who while they can get anything by asking will not work.—*G. R.*

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*Verse* 8.—"*O forsake me not utterly.*" Divine desertion deprecated. I. The anguished prayer. 1. Sovereign forsakings. Sovereignty is not arbitrariness or capriciousness: perhaps its right definition is mysterious kingly love; unknown now, but justified when revealed. 2. Vicarious forsakings. 3. Forsakings on account of sin. David, Jonah, and Peter. The seven churches of Asia; the Jews. But to know what "*utter*" both in regard to degree and time means, we must go to hell. Like one trembling on the very verge of hell, he prays. Like belated traveller, in vast wood and surrounded by beasts of prey, sighs at day's departure. Like the watch on the raft seeing the sail that he has shouted himself hoarse to stop fading away in the sky line. II. Its doctrinal foundation. Where he condescendeth to dwell, his abode is perpetual. He can only utterly forsake us because he was deceived in us. He can only utterly forsake because baffled. Both imply blasphemy. Thou who hatest putting away, thou who hast never yet *utterly* forsaken any saint, make not me the solitary exception. III. Historical certainty of answer. The saint and the church in all time delivered. It may tarry till "eventide," as in Cowper's case. His face bore after death an expression of delighted surprise.—*W. A.*

*Verse* 9.—I. The young man's question. II. The wise man's reply.

*Verse* 9.—In the word of God, when applied to the heart by the Spirit of God, there is, I. A sufficiency of light to discover to men the need of cleansing their way. II. Sufficiency of energy for the cleansing their way. III. A sufficiency of pleasure to encourage them to choose to cleanse their way. IV. A sufficiency of support to sustain them in their cleansed way.—*Theophilus Jones, in a "Sermon to the Young,"* 1829.

*Verse* 9.—The word of God provides for the cleansing of the way, I. By pointing out to the young man the evil of the way. II. By discovering an infallible remedy for the disorders of his nature—the salvation that is by Jesus Christ. III. By becoming a directory in all the paths of duty to which he may be called.—*Daniel Wilson*, 1828.

*Verse* 9.—The Psalmist's rules for the attainment of holiness deduced from his own experience. 1. Seek God with thy "whole heart" (ver. 2). Be truly sensible of your wants. Keep and remember what God says (ver. 11): "Thy word have I hidden," etc. Reduce all this to practice (ver. 11): "That I might not sin against thee." 4. Bless God for what he has given (ver. 12): "Blessed art thou," etc. 5. Ask more (ver. 12): "Teach me thy statutes." 6. Be ready to communicate his knowledge to others (ver. 13): "With my lips have I declared." 7. Let it have a due effect on thy own heart (ver. 14): "I have rejoiced," etc. 8. Meditate frequently upon them (ver. 15): "I will meditate," etc. 9. Deeply reflect on them (ver. 16): "I will have respect," etc. As food undigested will not nourish the body, so the word of God not considered with deep meditation and reflection will not feed the soul. 10. Having pursued the above course he should continue in it, and then his happiness would be secured (ver. 16): "I will not forget thy word: I will (in consequence) delight myself in thy statutes."—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 9.—A question and answer for the young. The Bible is a book for young people. Here it intimates, I. That the young man's way *needs to be cleansed.* His way of thinking, feeling, speaking, acting. II. That *he must take an active part in the work.* The efficient cause in the operation is God. Other good influences are also at work. But the young man must be in hearty and practical sympathy with the work. III. That *he must use the Bible for the purpose.* This records facts, presents incitations, enjoins precepts, utters promises, and sets up examples, all which are adapted to make a young man holy. By reading, studying, and imitating the Scriptures in a lowly and prayerful spirit the young shall escape pollution and ornament society.—*W. J.*

*Verse* 9.—A word to the young. I. Show how the young man is in

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special danger of defiling his way. Through, 1. His strong passions. 2. His immature judgment. 3. His inexperience. 4. His rash self-sufficiency. 5. His light companions, and, 6. His general heedlessness. II. The circumspection he should use to cleanse his way. "*Taking heed,*" 1. Of his evil propensities. 2. Of his companions. 3. Of his pursuits. 4. Of the tendencies of all he does. III. The infallible guide by which his circumspection is to be regulated: "*according to thy word*"—that is to say, 1. Its precepts. 2. Its examples. 3. Its motives. 4. Its warnings. 5. Its allurements.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 10.—I. A grateful review. II. An anxious forecast. III. A commendable prayer.

*Verse* 10.—The believer's two great solicitudes. 1. What he is anxious to find: "I have sought thee." 2. What he is afraid of losing: "Thy commandments."—*W. D.*

*Verse* 10.—*Sincerity not self-sufficiency.* I. The believer must be conscious of whole-heartedness in seeking God. II. But consciousness of sincerity does not warrant self-sufficiency. III. The most whole-hearted seeker must still look to divine grace to keep him from wandering.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 11.—The best thing, in the best place, for the best of purposes.

*Verse* 12.—The blessedness of God, and the mode of entering into it.

*Verse* 12.—I. David gives glory to God: "*Blessed art thou, O* LORD." II. He asks grace from God.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 12.—I. What it is, or how God doth teach us. 1. God doth teach us outwardly; by his ordinances, by the ministry of men. 2. Inwardly; by the inspiration and work of the Holy Ghost. II. The necessity of his teaching. III. The benefit and utility of it.—*T. Manton.*

*Verse* 12.—*Desire for Divine Teaching excited by the Recognition of Divine Blessedness.* I. Unveil in some inadequate degree the happiness of the ever blessed God, arising from his purity, benevolence, love. II. Show the way in which man may become partaker of that blessedness by conformity to his precepts. III. Utter the prayer of the text.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 13.—Speech fitly employed. It is occupied with a choice subject, a full subject, a subject profitable to men, and glorifying to God.

*Verse* 14.—Practical religion, the source of a comfort surpassing riches. It gives a man ease of mind, independence of carriage, weight of influence, and other matters supposed to arise out of wealth.

*Verse* 14.—I. The subject of rejoicing. Not the "testimonies" merely, but their observances, "the way of," etc. II. The rejoicing in that subject. 1. In its inward peace. 2. In its external consequences. III. the degree of the rejoicing: "as much as," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 14.—*The two scales of the balance.* Whatever riches are good for, God's testimonies are good for. I. Riches are desirable as the means of procuring the necessaries of life; but God's testimonies supply the necessities of the soul. II. Riches are desirable as a means of procuring personal enjoyment; but God's testimonies produce the highest joy. III. Riches are desirable as a means of attaining personal improvement; but God's testimonies are the highest educators. IV. Riches are desirable as a means of doing good; but God's testimonies work the highest good.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 15.—The contemplative and active life; their common food, object, and reward.

*Verse* 16.—I. What there is to be delighted in. II. What comes of such delight: "I will never forget." III. What comes of such memory—more delight.

*Verse* 17.—I. A bountiful master. II. A needy servant—begging for very life. III. A suitable recompense: "and keep thy word."

*Verse* 17.—We are here taught, I. That we owe our lives to God's mercy. II. That therefore we ought to spend our lives in God's service.—*Matthew Henry.*

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*Verse* 18.—I. The precious casket: "thy law." II. The invisible treasure: "wondrous things." III. The miraculous eyesight: "that I may behold." IV. The divine oculist: "Open thou mine eyes."

*Verse* 18.—*The hidden wonders of the gospel.* There are many hidden things in nature; many in our fellow men; so there are many in the Bible. The things of the Bible are hidden because of the blindness of man. I. *The blind man's sorrow:* "Open mine eyes." I cannot see. I have eyes and see not. The pain of this conscious blindness when a man really feels it. II. *The blind man's conviction:* "That I may behold wondrous," etc. There are wondrous things there to be seen. I am sure of it. There is a wonderful view,—(1) of sin; (2) of hell, as its desert; (3) of One ready to save; (4) of perfect pardon; (5) of God's love; (6) of all-sufficient grace; (7) of heaven. III. *The blind man's wisdom.* The fault is in my eyes, not in thy word. "Open my eyes," and all will be well. The reason for not seeing is because the eyes are blinded by sin. There is nothing wanting in the Bible. IV. *The blind man's prayer:* "Open *thou* mine eyes." 1. I cannot open them. 2. My dearest friends cannot. 3. Only thou canst. "Lord, I pray thee, now open them." Many seek to stop such praying. Be like Bartimeus who "*cried so much the more.*" V. *The blind man's anticipation:* "That I may behold." 1. The joy of a cured blind man when he is about to behold, for the first time, the beauties of nature. 2. The joy of the spiritually healed when they begin "looking unto Jesus." 3. The personal character of the joy: "Open thou *mine* eyes, that I may behold." I have hitherto had to see through the eyes of others. I would depend on other eyes no longer. The glad anticipation of Job: "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."—*Frederick G. Marchant, of Hitchin*, 1882.

*Verse* 18.—God's word suited to man's sense of wonder. I. We shall make some remarks on the sense of wonder in man, and what generally excites it. One of the first causes of wonder is the *new or unexpected.* The second source is to be found in things *beautiful and grand.* A third source is the *mysterious* which surrounds man—there are things *unknowable.* II. God has made provision for this sense of wonder in his revealed word. The Bible addresses our sense of wonder by constantly presenting the *new and unexpected* to us; it sets before us things *beautiful and grand.* If we come to the third source of wonder, that which raises it to *awe*, it is the peculiar province of the Bible to deal with this. III. The means we are to use in order to have God's word thus unfolded—the prayer of the Psalmist may be our guide—"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."—*John Ker, of Glasgow*, 1877.

*Verse* 18.—*Wondrous sights for opened eyes.* I. The wondrous things in God's law. A wondrous rule of life. A wondrous curse against transgression. A wondrous redemption from the curse shadowed forth in the ceremonial law. II. Special eyesight needed to behold them. They are spiritual things. Men are spiritually blind. 1 Cor. ii. 14. III. Personal prayer to the Great Opener of eyes.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 19.—An insight into the divine will, the best assistance in our journey through the earth. Or, what I am; where I am; where I am going; how am I to get there?

*Verse* 19 (*first clause*).—The stranger in the earth. I. A short exposition. The text means,—1. That the saint is not born of the earth. 2. That the saint is not known on earth. 3. The saint's portion is not upon the earth. 4. The saint is compassed with sorrows and trials upon earth. 5. The saint is soon to leave the earth. II. A short application. 1. Do not be like the world. 2. Be prepared to be a sufferer on the earth. 3. Sit loose to the world. 4. Correspond with home. 5. Cherish brotherly love for your fellow-strangers on the earth. 6. Hasten home. 7. Press others to come with you. —*Duncan Macgregor's Sermon in "The Shepherd in Israel,"* 1869.

*Verse* 19.—*The stranger's prayer.* I. How he came to be a stranger in the

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earth. He was born again. He learned the manners of his foreign home. He spoke the language of his Fatherland; and so was misunderstood and rejected on earth. II. How he longed after everything homelike. Home rules: "thy commandments." Home teaching: "hide not." Specially his Father's voice. III. How in his loneliness he solaced himself by communication with his Father. IV. Would you not like to be a stranger?—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 20.—I. The word sought, and sought at all times. II. The word sought, and sought with intense desire. III. The word sought, and sought the more intensely the more it is found. It was because he had found so much in the word of the Lord already, that the soul of the Psalmist was breaking to find more. Those who have been once admitted to "the secret of the Lord" find their highest joy in knowing that secret still more fully. It is to those who know that secret that the promise is given: "He will shew them his covenant:" Ps. xxv. 14.—*F. G. M.*

*Verse* 20.—One of the best tests of character and prophecies of what a man will be, are his longings. I. The saint's absorbing object: "Thy judgments." The word here is synonymous with the "word" of God. 1. The Psalmist greatly reverenced the word. 2. He intensely desired to know its contents. 3. He wishes to feed upon God's word. 4. He longed to obey it. 5. He longed to feel the power of God's judgments in his own heart. II. The saint's ardent longings. 1. They constitute a living experience. 2. The expression used in the text represents a humble sense of imperfection. 3. It indicates an advanced experience. 4. It is an experience which we may term a bitter sweet. 5. These longings may become very wearying to a man's soul. III. Cheering reflections. 1. God is at work in your soul. 2. The result of God's work is very precious. 3. It is leading on to something more precious. 4. The desire itself is doing you good. 5. It makes Christ precious. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1586: "Holy Longings."

*Verse* 21.—I. The character of the proud. II. God's dealings with them. III. Our own relation to them.

*Verse* 21.—I. The sin; "Err from the commandments." 1. By neglect; or, 2. By abuse of them. II. Its origin—pride: pride of reason, of heart, of life. III. Its punishment. 1. Rebuke. 2. Condemnation.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 23.—Meditation. I. Our best employment while others slander. II. Our best comfort under their falsehood. III. Our best preservative from a spirit of revenge. IV. Our best mode of showing our superiority to their attacks.

*Verse* 24.—I. He reverenced them as God's testimonies. II. He revelled in them as his delight. III. He referred to them as his counsellors.

*Verse* 25.—I. Nature and its tendency. II. Grace and its mode of operation. III. Both truths in their personal application.

*Verse* 25.—"*Quicken thou me,*" etc. I. There are many reasons why we should seek quickening. 1. Because of the deadening influence of the world. "My soul cleaveth," etc. 2. The influence of vanity (see ver. 37). 3. Because we are surrounded by deceivers (see ver. 87, 88). 4. Because of the effect of seasons of affliction upon us (see ver. 7). II. Some of the motives for seeking quickening. 1. Because of what you are—a Christian; life seeks more life. 2. Because of what you ought to be. 3. Because of what we shall be. 4. In order to obedience (see ver. 88). 5. For your comfort (ver. 107 and 50). 6. As the best security against the attacks of enemies (ver. 87 and 88). 7. To invigorate our memories (ver. 93). 8. Consider (as a motive to seek this quickening) the terrible consequences of losing spiritual life; or, in other words, lacking it in its manifest display. III. Some of the ways in which the quickening may be brought to us. 1. It must be by the Lord himself. "Quicken me, O Lord." 2. By the turning of the eyes (ver. 37). 3. By the word (ver. 50). 4. By the precepts (ver. 93). 5. By affliction (ver. 107). 6. By divine comforts. IV. Enquire where are

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our pleas when we come before God to ask for quickening. 1. Our necessity (ver. 107, etc.). 2. Our earnest desire (ver. 40). 3. Appeal to God's righteousness (ver. 40). 4. To his lovingkindness (ver. 88, 149, 156). 5. The plea in the text: "according to thy word" (ver. 28 and 107). See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1350: "Enlivening and Invigorating."

*Verse* 26.—Confession. Absolution. Instruction.

*Verse* 26.—I. The duty: "I have declared my ways"—made known my experience of thy word to others. II. Its notice by God: "Thou heardest me." III. Its reward. More knowledge will be given: "Teach me," etc. —*G. R.*

*Verse* 27.—I. A student's prayer. 1. It deals with the main subject of the conversation which is to be that student's occupation—"the way of God's precepts." 2. A confession is implied: "Make me," etc. 3. A great boon is asked—to understand, to know, thy statutes. 4. The Fountain of all wisdom is applied to. II. The occupation of the instructed man. 1. He testifies of God's works—his wondrous works—Christ's work for us; the Holy Spirit's work in us. The wonderful character of these works of God, a wide field for devout study. 2. He speaks very plainly: "I will talk," etc. 3. He will speak very frequently: "I will talk." 4. He will speak to the point: "So"—*i.e.*, according to understanding. III. The intimate relation between the prayer of the student and the pursuit that he subsequently followed. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1344: "The Student's Prayer."

*Verse* 27.—Education for the ministry. I. The student at college: "Make me to understand." His lesson. His instructor. His application. II. The preacher at his work: "So shall I talk," etc. His qualification. His theme. His manner.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 28.—Heaviness, its cause, curse, and cure.

*Verse* 29.—The way of lying. I. Describe the way of lying. Various paths, *e.g.*, erroneous views of doctrine: false grounds of faith: looseness of practice: shrinking from the daily cross. II. Show why it is thus named. It does not furnish its promised pleasures. It does not lead to its professed goal. It lies through the territory of the father of lies. III. Notice the peculiarity in the prayer against it. Not remove me from, but remove from me: for the way of lying is within us. IV. Our deliverance from the way of lying lies with God.—*C. A. D.*

*Verses* 29, 30.—I. The way of lying, our wish to have it removed, and the method of answer. II. The way of truth, our choice, and the method of carrying it out.

*Verse* 31.—Reasons for sticking to the Divine testimonies.

*Verse* 31.—A wholesome mixture. I. Sturdy fidelity. II. Self-distrust, and, III. Importunate prayer.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 32.—The Fettered Racer set free. I. The course that invited him. II. The shackles that bound him. III. The impatience that prompted him. IV. The Lord that freed him. V. Now let him go.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 32. I. Liberty desired. II. Liberty rightly used. Or, the effect of the heart upon the feet.

*Verse* 32.—The text will give us occasion to speak, 1. Of the benefit of an enlarged heart. The necessary precedency of this work on God's part, before there can be any serious bent or motion of heart towards God on our part. 3. The subsequent resolution of the saints to engage their hearts to live to God. 4. With what earnestness, alacrity and vigour of spirit this work is to be carried on: "I will run."—*T. Manton.*

*Verse* 32.—I. The way of obedience: "Thy commandments." II. The duty of obedience: "I will run"—not stand still—not loiter—not creep—not walk, but run. III. The life of obedience. 1. Where it lies—in the heart. 2. Whence it comes: "When thou shalt," etc. 3. What it does—enlarges the heart.—*G. R.*

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*Verse* 33.—In this prayer for grace observe, 1. The person to whom he prays: "*O Lord.*" 2. The person for whom: "teach *me.*" 3. The grace for which he prayeth: to be taught. 4. The object of this teaching: "The way of thy statutes." The teaching which he beggeth, is not speculative, but practical, to learn how to walk in the way of God.—*T. Manton.*

*Verse* 33.—The superior efficacy of divine teaching: it secures holy practice and insures its perpetuity.

*Verses* 33, 34.—*Light from above.* I. The blinding power of sin. "Teach me, *i.e.*, "point out to me." "Give me understanding." Whatever may have been the original amount of light which came from eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, that light has long been insufficient. 1. Men need light to discern the right way from the wrong. 2. Men need light to understand the beauties of the right way. Such beauties line the way of truth on either hand, but only the God-taught mind appreciates them. Even Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life, is as a root out of a dry ground, till the mind is taught of the Lord. Sin is the cause of this blindness. The farther any man walks in the way of sin, the less can he see of the beauties of holiness. II. The enlightening grace of the Lord. "Teach me." "Give me understanding." This grace, 1. May be boldly asked: "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God." 2. Will be freely given. "Who giveth to all men liberally." "Ask, and it shall be given." 3. Will be amply sufficient. "I shall keep it unto the end." "I shall keep Thy law." To see is to follow. III. The stimulating power of clearly revealed truth. "I shall observe it with my whole heart." To see is not only to follow, but to follow with love and gladness. It is written of the light which will come before the throne, "We shall be like him, *for* we shall see him as he is." "O thou, that dwellest between the Cherubim, shine forth," even here, on the way that leads to thy presence.—*F. G. M.*

*Verses* 33—35.—*Alpha and Omega.* I. God, the giver of spiritual instruction: ver. 33. II. Of spiritual understanding, without which this instruction is in vain: ver. 34. III. Of grace for practical obedience when thus instructed: ver. 35. IV. For whole-hearted obedience: ver. 34. V. For final perseverance: ver. 33.—*C. A. D.*

*Verses* 33—36.—*Human Dependence on Divine help.* I. There can be no steady keeping in the way of the Lord without the Lord's guidance: ver. 33. II. There can be no observing of the way with the heart without Divine light for the mind: ver. 34. III. There can be no diligent pursuit of the way till divine energy be given to the will: ver. 35. IV. There can be no true love of the way unless the heart be constrained by the love of God: ver. 36. He who said, "Without me ye can do nothing," is necessary for us to see the way, to understand the way, to walk in the way, and to love the way.—*F. G. M.*

*Verse* 34.—The influence of the understanding upon the heart, and the united power of understanding and heart over the life.

*Verse* 34.—*Seeing and loving.* I. When men see they love (the whole verse). II. When men love they see. Only the loving heart would have seen enough to write such a verse.—*F. G. M.*

*Verse* 35.—The prayer of a child, and the delight of a child. Or, Our pleasure in holiness a plea for grace.

*Verse* 35.—I. Delight avowed. II. Disinclination implied. III. Constraint implored.—*W. W.*

*Verse* 36.—Holiness a cure for covetousness.

*Verses* 36, 112.—*The Co-operation of the Divine and the Human in Salvation.* I. It is God that worketh in you: ver. 36. II. Therefore work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: ver. 112.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 37.—"*Quicken thou me in thy way.*" This brief prayer—1. Deals with the believer's frequent need. II. It directs us to the sole worker of quickening: "Thou." III. It describes the sphere of renewed vigour:

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"in thy way." IV. It denotes that there may be special reasons and special seasons for this prayer—times of temptation: ver. 37; seasons of affliction: ver. 107; when called to some extraordinary service. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1073: "A Honeycomb."

*Verse* 37.—Here is, I. Conversion *from* "vanity."—II. Conversion *to*—"thy way." III. Conversion *by*—"Quicken thou me."—*G. R.*

*Verse* 37.—David prays, (1) for *restraining* grace that he might be prevented and kept back from that which would hinder him in the way of his duty: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." He prays (2) for *constraining* grace, that he might not only be kept from everything that would obstruct his progress heavenward, but that he might have that grace which was necessary to forward him in that progress: "Quicken thou me in thy way."—*M. Henry.*

*Verse* 38.—Confirmation. What? "Thy word established." To whom? "Unto thy servant." Why? "Who is devoted," etc.

*Verse* 38.—Fear of God evidences itself, 1. By a dread of his displeasure. 2. Desire of his favour. 3. Regard for his excellencies. 4. Submission to his will. 5. Gratitude for his benefits. 6. Conscientious obedience to his commands.—*Charles Buck.*

*Verse* 38.—The four kinds of fear. 1. The fear of man, by which we are led rather to do wrong than to suffer evil. 2. Servile fear, through which we are induced to avoid sin only from the dread of hell. 3. Initial fear, in which we avoid sin partly from the fear of hell, but partly also from the love of God, which is the fear of ordinary Christians. 4. Filial fear, when we are afraid to disobey God only and altogether from the love we bear him. Jer. xxxii. 40.—*Ayguan, in J. Edward Vaux's "Preacher's Storehouse,"* 1878.

*Verse* 39.—I. Man's judgment dreaded. II. God's judgment approved.

*Verse* 39.—*The reproach of inconsistency.* I. The dishonour caused by it (2 Sam. xii. 14). II. The danger of incurring it. III. The prayer against it.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 40.—I. Gracious longings experienced. II. Great necessity felt—more life needed. III. Wise petition offered.

*Verse* 41.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1524: "Your Personal Salvation."

*Verse* 41.—I. God's mercies come to us unsought continually. His sparing mercies, temporal mercies, &c. II. The chief outcome of God's mercies is his salvation. It is our greatest need; it is his greatest gift. III. We should have a personal interest in this salvation: "Let thy mercies come also unto me." IV. When we seek God's salvation, we may plead his promise: "according to thy word."—*Horatio Wilkins, of Cheltenham,* 1882.

*Verse* 41.—"Even me." I. In me there is need of mercy. II. To me mercy can come. III. Thy salvation suits me. IV. Special difficulties would daunt me. V. Thy word encourages me.

*Verse* 41.—I. Salvation is all of mercy. II. All mercies are in salvation. III. All men should be anxious for salvation to come to them. IV. It can only come according to God's word.—*W. W.*

*Verses* 41—43.—*A Comprehensive Prayer.* I. The possession of salvation, ver. 41. II. Is the power for defence: ver. 42. III. And the qualification for usefulness: ver. 43.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 42.—Faith's answer to reproach found in the fact that she trusts God's word.

*Verses* 42, 43, 47.—Faith, hope, and love. "I trust." "I have hoped." "I have loved." Faith warring, hope testifying, love obeying.

*Verse* 43.—How the true preacher could be silenced, and his plea that he may not be so.

*Verse* 44.—The perpetuity of gracious living. On what it is conditioned: "So." How entirely it is consistent with free agency: "I keep." How continuous it is, and how eternal.

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*Verse* 44.—*Heaven begun below.* I. The present life of the believer—keeping God's law. II. The continual care of the believer—to keep God's law. III. The eternal prospect of the believer—keeping God's law for ever and ever.—*C. A. D.*

*Verses* 45—47.—Liberty of walk. Liberty of speech. Liberty of heart.

*Verses* 45—48.—The true freeman enjoys—1. *Free walk* with God. 2. *Free talk* about God. 3. *Free love* unto God. 4. *Free exercise* of soul, (1) in holy practice; (2) in heavenly meditation.—*W. Durban.*

*Verses* 45—48.—Five things the Psalmist promiseth himself here in the strength of God's grace. 1. That he should be free and easy in his duty: "I will walk at liberty." 2. That he should be bold and courageous in his duty: "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings." 3. That he should be cheerful and pleasant in his duty: "I will delight myself in thy commandments." 4. That he should be diligent and vigorous in his duty: "I will delight myself in thy commandments." 5. That he should be thoughtful and considerate in his duty: "I will meditate in thy statutes."—*M. Henry.*

*Verses* 46—48.—*Lips, heart, and hands.* I. Public profession of God's word ("I will speak," ver. 46) must be warranted by—II. Private delight in God's word ("I will delight myself," ver. 47), which must result in—III. Practical obedience to God's word ("I will lift up my hands," ver. 48).

*Verse* 46.—I. The truly earnest must speak. II. They are at no loss for good subjects: "Thy testimonies." The range is boundless—the variety endless. III. They never fear any audience: "before kings."—*W. W.*

*Verse* 48.—I. Love renewing its activity. II. Love refreshing itself with spiritual food.

*Verse* 48.—I. Scripture in the hand for reading. Often in the hand. II. In the mind for meditation: "I will meditate," etc. III. In the heart for love: "Which I have loved."—*G. R.*

*Verse* 48.—Religion engaged the whole manhood of David: hands, heart, head. I. The uplifted hands. 1. *Taking an oath of allegiance to God's word.* Gen. xiv. 22; Ezek. xx. 28. To receive its doctrines, obey its precepts, regard its warnings, uphold its honour. 2. *Imploring a blessing upon God's word.* Gen. xlviii. 14; Lev. ix. 22; Luke xxiv. 50. That its light might spread: "Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel;" that its influence may become universal. II. The loyal heart. 1. *This accounts for uplifted hands.* He had loved the word himself. Religion is inward first, then outward. We must love it before we are anxious to spread it. 2. *But what accounts for the loyal heart?* The word had brought him salvation, yielded him sustenance, afforded him guidance. We love the word for its joyous effects upon ourselves. III. The studious mind. 1. Devout meditation the best employment. 2. The Word of God affords a grand field for it. 3. To meditate in it learn to love it: "have loved," "will meditate."—*W. W.*

*Verse* 48.—I. God's commandments loved. We love the law when we love the Lawgiver. We love his will only when our hearts are reconciled and renewed. Hence the need of spiritual renewal. II. God's commandments the subject of prayer: "My hands also will I lift up." Perowne says, "The expression denotes the act of prayer." We may pray for a fuller knowledge, a deeper experience, a readier and more perfect obedience. III. A theme for meditation. Amidst the hurry of outward activities we must not forget the need of quiet meditation.—*H. W.*

*Verse* 49.—I. The personality of the word: "The word unto thy servant." II. The application of the word: "upon which thou hast caused me to hope." III. The pleading of the word: "Remember the word," etc.

*Verse* 49.—*The word of hope.* I. God's word the foundation of human hope. (The fact of a revelation. The substance of the revelation.) II. Particular words of God which have been found peculiarly hope-enkindling. III. The pleading of such words at the throne of grace.—*C. A. D.*



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*Verse* 50.—Each man has his own affliction and his own consolation. Quickened piety the best comfort. The word the means of it.

*Verse* 50.—I. The need of consolation. II. The consolation needed.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 51.—The proud man's contumely, and the gracious man's constancy.

*Verse* 51.—*Fidelity in the face of contempt.* I. The proud deride the believer's subjection to God's law. II. They ridicule the believer's delight in God's service. III. They are met by the believer's resolution to cleave to God. 2 Sam. vi. 20, 22.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 52.—Comfort derived from a review of the ancient doings of the Lord towards the wicked and his people.

*Verse* 52.—I. The dead speaking to the living. II. The living listening to the dead.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 52.—*Sweet water from a dark well.* I. God's judgments are calculated to inspire terror. II. But they prove God's superintending care over the world. III. They are ever against sin, and for holiness. IV. In all times of judgment God delivers his people. Noah, Lot, etc. V. Therefore God's judgments are a source of comfort to the believer.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 53.—The sensations of godly men at the sight of sinners: horror at their crime, their perseverance in it, their rejection of grace, and their end.

*Verse* 53.—*Horror-stricken.* I. The guilt and danger of impenitent sinners. II. The horror and concern of godly spectators. III. The prayer and labour which such concern should dictate.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 54.—Here is—I. Light in darkness. II. Companionship in solitude. III. Activity in rest: "house of pilgrimage."—*G. R.*

*Verse* 54.—The cheerful pilgrim. I. A good man views his residence in this world as only the house of his pilgrimage. II. The situation, however disadvantageous, admits of cheerfulness. III. The sources of his joy are derived from the Scriptures.—*W. Jay.*

*Verse* 54.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1652: "The Singing Pilgrim."

*Verse* 55 with 49.—"Remember." "I have remembered."

*Verse* 55.—Night memories. Day duties. How they act and react upon each other.

*Verse* 55.—Dark nights. Bright memories. Right results.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 55.—I. Happy though restless night. II. Happy though busy day.—*W. D.*

*Verse* 56.—The gains of godliness; or, what a man gets through holy living.

*Verse* 56.—I. The duty: "I kept thy precepts." II. Its reward: "This I had," etc. Protection: "this I had." Guidance: "this I had." Prosperity: "this I had." Consolation: "this I had."—*G. R.*

*Verse* 57.—I. The infinite possession: "Thou art my portion, O LORD." Notice—1. A clear distinction made by the Psalmist between his portion and that of the ungodly here and hereafter: See Ps. lxxiii. 2. A positive claim: "Thou art my portion, O LORD." This "portion" is boundless, abiding, appropriate, satisfying, elevating, all of grace. II. The appropriate resolution: "I have said that I would keep thy words." 1. Notice the preface: "I have said." 2. The link between the portion possessed and the resolution made. 3. The work of keeping God's words. Keep him who is the *Word*—Christ Jesus. Keep the word of the gospel—doctrines, precepts, promises (kept in the heart to comfort the believer). This blessed subject suggests a solemn contrast. See the portion of that servant who did not keep his Lord's word: Matt. xxix. 48—51. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1372: "God our Portion, and his Word our Treasure."

*Verse* 57 (*first clause*).—The believer's portion. I. Show the validity of his claim: "my." 1. A gift by covenant: Heb. viii. 10—13. 2. Involved

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in joint heirship with Christ: Rom. viii. 17. 3. Confirmed by the experience of faith. II. Survey the superlative value of his possession: "The Lord." 1. Absolutely good. 2. Infinitely precious. 3. Inexhaustibly full. 4. Everlastingly sure. III. Suggest a method of deriving the greatest *present* advantage from it. 1. Meditate much upon God, under the conviction that he is your portion. 2. Carry all cares to him, and cast every burden on him. 3. Refer every temptation to the word of his law, and every doubt to the word of his promise. 4. Draw largely upon his riches to meet every need as it arises.—*John Field, of Sevenoaks*, 1882.

*Verses* 57, 58.—The believer's estate, profession, and petition.

*Verse* 58.—*The soul's sunshine.* I. God's favour the one thing needful. II. Whole-heartedness the one mode of entreating it. III. Covenant mercy the one plea for obtaining it.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 58.—We may learn how a seeker may come to enjoy saving favour, by a careful study of—I. The Profession: "I intreated thy favour with my whole heart." 1. What he did: "I intreated." *Heb.* "I painfully sought thy face." Earnest desire. Importunate supplication. Painful sorrow for sin. 2. How he did it: "With my whole heart." The intellect, affections, will, all engaged and concentrating effort. Otherwise, seeking is solemn trifling. This only worthy of our purpose, pleasing to God, and successful. 3. The evidence that we are doing it. Frequent prayer, searching the word, often enquiring. The first and main business—Giving up for Christ. II. The Petition: "Be merciful unto me." 1. God's favour to be expected on the terms of mercy only. 2. Happily, this is a prayer every sinner can and should use. 3. Blessedly true it is, that it never fails. III. The Plea: "According to thy word." 1. A plea that cannot be gainsaid is a great thing in an entreaty. 2. The promise of God is just such a plea. 3. Seek it out, lay hold of it, and urge it.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 59.—I. Self-examination: "I thought on" my private "ways"—my social ways—my sacred ways—my public ways. II. Its advantages: "And turned my feet," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 59.—I. Unthinking and straying. II. Thinking and turning.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 59.—I. Conviction. II. Conversion.—*W. D.*

*Verse* 59.—*Thinking on our own ways.* Enquire, I. Why so generally neglected? 1. Want of courage. 2. Occupied too much. 3. Unpleasant, and therefore the chief care of many is to banish it. II. When is it wisely conducted? 1. When honestly engaged in. 2. When thoroughly carried out. 3. When Scripture is made the referee and standard. 4. When Divine help is sought. III. What end will it serve? 1. Turn us from our own ways with shame and penitence. 2. Turn us to God's testimonies with earnestness, reverence, and hopefulness.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 59.—I. Right thinking: "I thought on my ways." 1. That this thought upon his ways caused the Psalmist dissatisfaction is evident. 2. Right thinking upon our ways will suggest a practical change. 3. The retrospect we take of our life should suggest that any turn we make should be Godward: "Unto thy testimonies." 4. Right thinking also suggests that such a turning is possible. II. Right turning. The turn was—1. Complete. 2. Practical. 3. Spiritual. 4. Immediate. 5. It must be a divine work. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1181: "Thinking and Turning."

*Verse* 60.—The dangers of delay. The reasons for prompt action.

*Verse* 60.—*A sermon to loiterers.* I. Reflection. Keeping God's commandments is my duty; is my welfare. Commandments delayed may be never kept. Delay is in itself disobedience. Alacrity is the soul of obedience. II. Resolve. I will make haste and delay not.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 60.—I. Quick. II. Sure.—*W. D.*

*Verse* 60.—Procrastination considered in its most important application; that is, to religion. I. This procrastination is irrational. II. It is unpleasant,

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disagreeable, painful. III. It is disgraceful. IV. It is sinful, and that is the highest degree. V. It is dangerous.—*John Angell James.*

*Verse* 61.—I. Spiritual highway-robbery. II. The traveller keeping his road. Or, what enemies can do, and what they cannot do.

*Verse* 62.—I. The duty of gratitude: "give thanks." II. The subject for gratitude: "thy righteous judgments." III. The season for gratitude: at night as well as in the day.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 62.—Up in the night. Singing in the night. Reasons for such singular conduct.

*Verse* 62.—*The nightingale.* I. A natural association of thought: "midnight" and "judgments." Exod. xii., etc. II. An incongruous association of feeling: "thanks" and "judgments." III. A full justification of this apparent incongruity: "*thanks* because of thy *righteous* judgments." IV. A vigorous performance of an incumbent duty: "at midnight I will rise to give thanks."—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 63.—I. True religion is friendly. II. Our friendliness should be catholic. III. Our friendliness should be discriminating. IV. Such friendliness is most useful.

*Verse* 63.—Of good and bad company. How to avoid the one, and improve the other. See W. Bridge's Sermon, in his works, vol. v. p. 90. Tegg's edition, 1845.

*Verse* 63.—The believer's choice of companions. I. Ought to be decided by their piety: "Them that fear thee." II. Is directed by their conduct: "Them that keep thy precepts." III. Should be extended as far as possible: "All." IV. Involves reciprocal obligation: "I am a companion."—*J. F.*

*Verse* 64.—The sum and substance of this verse will be comprised in these five propositions:—I. That saving knowledge is a benefit that must be asked of God. II. That this benefit cannot be too often or sufficiently enough asked: it is his continual request. III. In asking, we are encouraged by the bounty or mercy of God. IV. That God is merciful all his creatures declare. V. That his goodness to all his creatures should confirm us in hoping for saving grace or spiritual good things.—*T. Manton.*

*Verse* 64.—I. Observations in the school of nature. II. Supplications to enter the school of grace.

*Verse* 64.—The mercy of God in nature and his mercy as revealed in the word. I. The one excellent; the other super-excellent. II. The one easily given; the other coming through a great sacrifice. III. The one may be enjoyed, and even increase condemnation; the other, if enjoyed, is sure salvation. IV. The one should lead to repentance; the other is specially adapted for the penitent's restoration to holiness.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 65.—The servant giving his master a character; or, experience tallying with Scripture: two fruitful themes.

*Verse* 65.—I. Experience confirmed by the word. II. The word confirmed by experience.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 65.—A servant's story. I. Although he knew my faults he engaged me. II. Although I am so far beneath him, yet he familiarly teaches me. III. Although I am always ailing, he is very kind to me in my afflictions. IV. Although I am one of the meanest of his servants, he permits me to feast at his own table. V. Although I do little work, he will pay me good wages. VI. Although I am to have such great wages, I have very many perquisites. VII. Although my Master is all this to me (can you believe it?) I murmur and repine at him if he crosses me in anything. Application:—1. Does not the word "servant" sound like a misnomer?—"not servants . . . . but I have called you friends." 2. Though he calls me "friend," I shall never cease to call him "Master."—*Richard Andrew Griffin, in "Stems and Twigs."*

*Verse* 66.—I. Singular faith: "I have believed thy commandments." II. Special petition based upon it: "Teach me."

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*Verse* 66.—The value of a good judgment to sound knowledge. I. It carefully discriminates between truth and error. II. It puts each truth in its proper relation to other truths. III. It holds every truth firmly, but has the greater care for the more important. IV. It rather avoids the curious and the speculative, but really loves the plain and useful. V. Knowing that truths are rightly held only, when applied, it turns all to practical account. VI. Knowing also, that good food may, under some circumstances, become poisonous, it is careful in its selection and use of truths.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 67.—I. The dangers of prosperity. II. The benefits of adversity.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 67.—The restraining power of affliction

*Verses* 67, 71, 75.—*Affliction thrice viewed and thrice blessed.* I. Before affliction: straying. II. In affliction: learning. III. After affliction: knowing.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 68.—The double plea for a choice blessing. The goodness of God the hope of our ignorance.

*Verse* 68.—"*Thou art good and doest good.*" The nature and work of God are manifest in nature, providence, grace, and glory. They are morally good; beneficially good; perfectly good; immeasurably good; immutably good; experimentally good; satisfactorily good.—*W. J.*

*Verse* 68 (*first clause*).—A sermon on God's goodness. I. The perfectness of it. II. The proofs of it. III. The power it should have over us.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 69.—Whole-hearted obedience the best solace under slander; the best answer to it; and the best way of converting the slanderers.

*Verse* 70.—I. Fatty degeneration of the heart. II. Thorough regeneration of the heart.

*Verse* 70.—*A fatty heart.* I. The diagnosis of the disease. II. Its symptoms. Pride; no delight in God, nor in his law; dislike to his people; readiness to lie: ver. 69. III. Its fatal character. IV. Its only cure. Psa. li. 10; Ezek. xxxvi. 26.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 71.—I. David knew what was good for him. II. David learned what is good essentially. Active obedience is learned by passive obedience.

*Verse* 71.—Affliction an instructor. I. Never welcomed: "Have been." II. Often impatiently endured. III. Always gratefully remembered: "It is good," etc. IV. Efficient for a perverse scholar: "That I might learn." V. Indispensable in the education of all.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 71.—*The school of affliction.* I. The reluctant scholar sent to school. II. The scholar's hard lesson. III. The scholar's blessed learning. IV. The scholar's sweet reflection.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 72.—The advantages of riches far excelled by the blessings of the word.

*Verse* 72.—*A valuation.* I. The saints' high estimate of God's law. II. Show when it was formed: in affliction: ver. 71. III. Vindicate its truth—by illustrating the hollowness of riches, and the satisfaction found in godliness.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 72.—The word, better than gold and silver. I. It gives what gold and silver cannot purchase. II. Without what it gives, gold and silver may be a curse. III. Without gold and silver, it may yield its treasure more freely and fully than with them. IV. The word and what it gives shall rejoice the heart when gold and silver shall be useless to their disappointed worshippers.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 72.—"*The law of thy mouth is better,*" etc. I. It is more refining, and makes me a better man. II. It is more enriching, and makes me a wealthier man. III. It is more distinguishing, and makes me a greater man. IV. It is more sustaining, and makes me a stronger man. V. It is more preserving, and makes me a safer man. VI. It is more satisfying, and makes me a happier man. VII. It is more lasting, and better suited to me as an immortal man.—*W. J.*

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*Verse* 73.—I. Consider the Lord's great care in our creation. II. See in it a reason for his perfecting the new creation within us. III. Observe the method of this perfecting.

*Verse* 74.—I. The encouraging influence of good men upon others. II. The instructive influence of others upon them.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 74.—Converse with a tried but steadfast believer is a source of gladness to the children of God. I. He has a thrilling tale of experience to tell. II. He has valuable counsels and cautions to give. III. He is a monument of God's faithfulness, confirming the hope of others. IV. He is an epistle of Christ, written expressly to illustrate the preciousness and the power of the gospel.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 75.—Experimental knowledge: positive, personal, glorifying to God, consoling to the saints.

*Verse* 76.—Comfort. I. May be a matter of prayer. II. Is provided for in the Lord. III. Is promised in the word. IV. Is of great value to the believer.

*Verse* 76.—I. The need of comfort. II. The source of comfort: "Thy merciful kindness." III. The rule of comfort: "According to thy word."—*G. R.*

*Verse* 77.—I. Visitors invited. II. Boon expected. III. Welcome guaranteed: "for thy law," &c.

*Verse* 77.—*Divine life*—it is born, sustained, increased, by God's tender mercies.—*W. W.*

*Verse* 78.—I. A hard thing—to make the proud ashamed. II. A cruel thing—"they dealt perversely with me," &c. III. A wise thing—"but I will meditate," &c.

*Verse* 79.—Restoration to church fellowship. I. Good men may be in such a case as to need to be restored. II. They should not be ashamed to seek it. III. They should pray about it.

*Verse* 79.—*Select society.* I. Sociableness is an instinct of human nature. II. Sociableness is helpful to a wholesome Christian life. III. The choice of society should be a subject of prayer.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 80.—I. David's prayer for sincerity—that his heart might be brought to God's statutes, and that it might be sound in them, not rotten or deceitful. II. His dread of the consequences of hypocrisy: "that I be not ashamed." Shame is the portion of hypocrites, here or hereafter.—*M. Henry.*

*Verse* 80.—I. The heart in religion. II. The necessity of its being sound in it. III. The result of such sound-heartedness.

*Verse* 81.—Text suitable for a missionary sermon. I. The condition of the heathen world, enough to make the Christian faint for the salvation of God to visit it. 1. The grossness of its darkness. 2. Its wide area. 3. Its long continuance. 4. The limited character and effect of mission labour. 5. The opposing influences. II. This condition, though exceedingly sad, is not hopeless. Because—1. Of the intention, adaptation, and universal call of the gospel. 2. Of Christ's commission to his church. 3. Of the compassionate character of the spiritually enlightened, produced by their faith in the word. 4. Of the prophecies and promises. Thus, there is hope in the word. III. If Christians are fainting for the salvation, but hoping in the word, their interest in mission work will be intense, and will show itself, 1. In earnest prayer for more labourers, and greater results. 2. In devoting themselves, if possible, to the work. 3. In free and generous giving, to help on the work.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 81.—"*My soul fainteth,*" etc. Men faint for health, provision, rest, promotion, success, and in some instances for salvation. David fainted. I. For his own salvation. 1. From guilt: "Deliver me from all my transgressions;" "from bloodguiltiness." 2. From defilement: "Create in me a clean heart." "Wash me." 3. From formality: "Let the words of my mouth," etc. 4. From darkness: "Why hidest thou thyself?" "Lift up,"

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etc. "Say unto my soul," etc. 5. From unhappiness: "Out of the depths," etc. II. For the salvation of others. 1. He talked about it: "Time for thee to work, Lord." 2. He prayed for it: "Oh that the salvation," etc. "Let thy work," etc. "God be merciful unto us:" "Save now, I beseech thee." 3. He laboured for it: "I will make mention of thy righteousness:" "I will teach transgressors thy ways."—*W. J.*

*Verse* 81.—I. Eagerness of expectation. II. Energy of hope. III. Establishment of promise: "In thy word."

*Verse* 81.—"*Salvation,*" in Scripture, hath divers acceptations: it is put—1. For that temporal deliverance which God giveth, or hath promised to give to his people: so it is taken. Exod. xiv. 13. 2. For the exhibition of Christ in the flesh. Ps. xcviii. 2, 3; Luke ii. 29, 30. 3. For the benefits which we have by Christ on this side of heaven; as the pardon of sin, and the renovation of our natures. Matt. i. 21; Titus iii. 5; Ps. li. 12. 4. For everlasting life: "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. i. 9); meaning thereby our final reward.—*T. Manton.*

*Verse* 81.—I. Faint. II. Pursuing.—*W. D.*

*Verse* 82.—Answer to the enquiry—"When wilt thou comfort me?" 1. When your grief has answered its purpose. 2. When you believe. 3. When you leave sin. 4. When you obey. 5. When you submit to my will. 6. When you seek my glory.

*Verse* 82.—I. How longingly the believer turns to God for comfort in his affliction; "When wilt thou comfort me?" II. How intently he gazes upon the Divine promises: "My eyes fail for thy word." III. How the weariness of waiting cannot wear out his patience, while hope increases his importunity: "When wilt thou?"—*J. F.*

*Verse* 82.—*The pleading of the eyes.* I. How the eyes speak. By "expression" of the moods of the soul, as—longing, Isa. viii. 17; faith, Isa. xlv. 22; Heb. xii. 2; expectation, Ps. v. 3; Phil. iii. 20; Tit. ii. 13; love, 2 Cor. iii. 18; John i. 14. II. What the eyes say. "When wilt *thou* comfort me? Brushing aside all other comforters, thou art my sun: my life: my love: my all." III. How the pleading eyes shall meet the responsive Eye of the Lord: Heb. ix. 18. In the look of the recognition of grief, Ex. ii. 25; in the look of pardon, Luke xxii. 61; of strength-giving, Jud. vi. 14; of complacent love, Isa. lxvi. 2.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 83.—I. The outward man in ill case. II. Character blackened. III. Constantly exposed to discomfort. IV. Contents maturing.

*Verse* 83.—"*A bottle in the smoke.*" I. God's people have their trials. 1. From the poverty of their condition. 2. Our trials frequently result from our comforts. 3. The ministry hath much smoke with it. 4. The poor bottle in the smoke keeps there for a long time, till it gets black. II. Christian men feel their troubles; they are like "bottles" in the smoke. 1. The trial that we do not feel is no trial at all. 2. Trials which are not felt are unprofitable trials. A bottle in the smoke gets very black, becomes very useless, is an empty bottle. III. Christians do not, in their troubles, forget God's statutes—the statutes of command, the statutes of promise. Why was it that David still held fast by God's statutes? 1. He was not a bottle in the fire, or he would have forgotten them. 2. Jesus Christ was in the smoke with him, and the statutes were in the smoke with him, too. 3. The statutes were in the soul, where the smoke does not enter.—*From "Spurgeon's Sermons." No.* 71.

*Verse* 84.—A solemn question pointing to the shortness of life, the severity of sorrow, the necessity of industry, the nearness of the reward.

*Verse* 85.—Pits; or, the secret schemes of wicked men against the godly.

*Verse* 86 (*last clause*).—A prayer for all occasions. See the many cases in which it is used in Scripture.

*Verse* 87.—I. What the good man loses by gaining. II. What he gains by losing.—*G. R.*

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*Verse* 87.—I. "Almost," but not altogether. II. The saving clause: "I forsook not thy precepts."

*Verse* 87.—Passing through fires, and the asbestos covering.

*Verse* 88.—I. New life is the cause of new obedience. II. New obedience is the effect of new life.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 88.—Quickening. I. Our greatest need. II. God's most gracious boon. III. The guarantee of our steadfastness; and so, IV. The promoter of God's glory.

*Verse* 88.—1. He closes with a frequent petition: "*Quicken thou me*—make me alive." All true religion consists in the LIFE *of God* in the SOUL *of man.* 2. The *manner* in which he wishes to be quickened: "*After thy loving-kindness.*" He wishes not to be raised from the *death of sin by God's thunder*, but by the *loving voice* of a *tender Father.* 3. The *effect* it should have upon him: "*So shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.*" Whatever thou *speakest* I will *hear, receive, love, and obey.*—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verses* 89—92.—The Psalmist here tells us the prescription which soothed his pains and sustained his spirits. Here we have strong consolation. I. In certain facts which he remembered. 1. The eternal existence of God. 2. The immutability of his word. 3. The faithfulness of the fulfilment of that word. 4. The perpetuity of the word in nature. 5. The perpetuity of the word in experience. II. The delights which he experienced in the time of his trouble. In bereavements; when everything seemed shifting and inconstant; when his own faith failed him; when all helpers failed him; he fell back upon the eternal settlements: "O Lord, thy word is settled," etc. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1656: "My Solace in my Affliction."

*Verse* 89.—Eternal settlements, or, heavenly certainties.

*Verse* 89.—God's eternal calm (in contrast with earth's mutations) imaged in the starry heavens.—*William Bickle Haynes, of Stafford*, 1882.

*Verse* 89.—Consider, I. The term, "thy word." 1. A word is a revealed thought. The Scriptures are just this: the thoughts and purposes of God made intelligible to man. 2. But a "word" also marks specially unity (it is one word) and wholeness or completeness, a word, not a syllable. The Scriptures are one and complete. II. The statement, "for ever settled in heaven." 1. "Settled in heaven" before it came to earth; therefore it could come as a continuous unfolding, through various dispensations, without the shadow of hesitation or contradiction manifest in it. 2. Abides "settled in heaven," for its central revelation; the atonement is a completed fact, and Christ is now in heaven a perfected Saviour; thus the word is unalterable. 3. "For ever settled in heaven." Not only because God in heaven is of one mind and cannot be turned; but because righteousness itself, the righteousness of heaven, demands that an atonement by suffering shall be fully and everlastingly answered by its due reward. III. The lessons. 1. If settled in heaven, men on earth can never unsettle it. 2. The wicked may not indulge a future hope arising from any new dispensation beyond the grave; God's present word to us cannot then be unsettled. 3. The godly may rely on a settled word amidst the unsettled experiences and feelings incident to earth.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 90.—The stability of the earth a present picture of everlasting faithfulness.

*Verses* 90, 91.—Consider, I. The steadfastness of nature as dependent upon the divine decree: "according to thy ordinances." II. The subserviency of nature to the divine will: "for all are thy servants." III. The fixedness of nature's laws, together with their subserviency to God's purposes, as a confirmation of the Christian's faith in the written word, in the care of a divine providence, and in the sureness of spiritual and heavenly things. "Thy faithfulness is," etc.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 91.—Our starry monitors. They teach us, I. To serve: though we cannot shine with their brightness. II. To do all with strict regard to

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God's will. III. To "continue"—"according to thine ordinances."—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 91.—The service of nature. I. Universal: "all are thy servants." II. Obedient: "according to thy ordinances." III. Perpetual: "they continue." IV. Derived: "thou hast established the earth."

*Verse* 92.—The sustaining power of joy in God.

*Verse* 92.—The word of God as a sustaining power amid the greater sorrows of life. I. Its necessity. 1. For want of it, men have become drunkards to drown their sorrows, have become suicides because life was unbearable, have become broken and hopeless because they had no strength to struggle against misfortune, have become atheists in creed as, alas, they were before in practice; all, in fact, become subject to sorrow's worst bitterness and calamity's worst effects. 2. Nothing can supply the place of God's word. Nature throws no light on the mystery of suffering. Human philosophy is at best cold comfort, and when most needed most fails. II. Its efficiency. Proved—1. In the experience of those who have tried it. 2. By the character of its promises. 3. By the discovery it makes of a beneficent providence working through calamity and sorrow. 4. By the revelation it gives of the pity of God and the sympathy of Christ. 5. By its record of the "Man of sorrows," who through suffering wrought out man's salvation, and entered into glory. 6. By its teaching concerning the Incarnate Word; thus showing a suffering God, which may well be a solace to suffering men. 7. By displaying the glory of heaven and the eternal felicity awaiting those who overcome through the blood of the Lamb.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 92.—The Godly Man's Ark; or, City of Refuge in the day of his Distress. Discovered in divers (five) Sermons . . . . By Edmund Calamy, B. D. . . . . Eighteenth edition. 1709. 12mo.

*Verse* 92.—We have here set before us by the Psalmist, I. The case which he had been in, and which he now refers to—one sad and sinking. He was under such affliction that he was ready to perish; which seems to include inward and outward trouble at once; trials without and pressure within. II. What it was that gave him relief, and this when nothing else could, &c., the law of God. III. How he looked back upon this relief received, namely, with thankfulness to God, to whom he speaks, and records it for the encouragement and direction of others: "Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction."—*Daniel Wilcox*, 1676—1733.

*Verse* 92.—*The life-buoy.* Under the form of the narrative of a shipwrecked mariner, describe the experience of the soul struggling in the sea of affliction; almost overwhelmed: yet buoyed up over each successive billow: and finally saved by clinging to the Word of God.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 92.—The Psalmist's shudder at recollected danger. I. Sore peril: affliction tending to despair and ruin. II. Fearful crisis: "then." III. Many-handed help: "thy law my delights."—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 93.—Experience fixes the word upon the memory.

*Verse* 93.—I. A good resolve: "I will never forget thy precepts." 1. The precepts are worth remembering. 2. Safety lies in remembering them. 3. Fidelity to God cannot be without remembering them. 4. Not to remember them is shameful ingratitude. II. An excellent reason for making it: "For with them thou hast quickened me." 1. A reason founded upon personal experience: "me." 2. A reason appreciative of the benefit received: "quickened." 3. A reason indicative of gratitude to God: "thou."—*J. F.*

*Verse* 93.—"Never forget"; an often-uttered phrase. Here golden. I. Something that *could* not be forgotten: life and pardon received. How could it? II. Something that *should* not be forgotten: the precious instrumentality.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 93.—I. The instrumental power of truth. 1. Used by God in our

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regeneration: James i. 18; Psa. xix. 7. 2. Used in our liberation: John viii. 32. 3. Used in our sanctification: John xvii. 7. II. Our consequent affection for it. We cannot forget. 1. Our past obligations to it. 2. Our present dependence upon it. 3. Our future needs of it.—*W. W.*

*Verse* 94.—1. David claims relation to God: "I am thine"—devoted to thee, and owned by thee, thine in covenant. 2. He proves his claim: "I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts"; *i.e.*, I have carefully enquired concerning my duty, and diligently endeavoured to do it. 3. He improves his claim: "I am thine, save me." Save me from sin, save me from ruin.—*M. Henry.*

*Verse* 94.—I. A great prayer: "Save me." II. A grand prayer: "I am thine." III. A gracious experience: "I have sought," etc.

*Verse* 94.—I. Relation: "I am thine." II. Preservation: "save me." III. Obligation: "I have sought," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 94.—I. God's child humbly points out to him his responsibility: "I am thine." II. Ventures to urge his own sincerity: he has at least "sought." III. With these two hands extended, he utters a sharp cry for help: "save me."—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 94.—*Multum in parvo.* I. A profession. II. A prayer. III. A plea.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 94.—I. God's interest in us. II. Our interest in God.—*W. D.*

*Verse* 94.—The characteristics of personal religion. I. Personal devotedness to God: "I am thine." II. Personal obedience rendered: "I have sought thy precepts." III. Personal expectation cherished: "save me."—*J. F.*

*Verse* 94.—The courage obedience gives. I. It emboldens us to a firm assurance: "I am thine, for I have," etc. 1. We become God's by faith alone. 2. But the assurance of being his cannot exist without obedience; obedience proves the faith to ourselves; satisfies us concerning grace received. 3. Poor obedience always interferes with assurance. II. It emboldens us to pray, and in prayer: "Save me." 1. The Christian's prayers are only of faith and offered in faith. 2. Yet disobedience makes him shrink from approaching God in prayer, and renders him feeble in petitioning. 3. Obedience is humble but bold. The middle clause of the text applies equally to the first and third clauses.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 95.—Wicked men patient in carrying out their evil designs. Good men patient in considering the ways of the Lord.

*Verse* 95.—The hatred of the wicked towards the righteous. I. Show that it ever has been, and still is. 1. Select Scriptural instances, beginning with Abel. 2. Notice the persecutions of the church. 3. Treatment in the workshop. 4. Often in the home. 5. The contemptuous manner the "saints" are spoken of, etc. II. Enquire as to why it is so. 1. The enmity of the carnal heart to God. 2. The jealousy excited by the Christian's assurance of eternal blessedness. 3. The consciousness of being rebuked by a holy life. 4. Excited to it by Satan. 5. The restless mischievousness of sin which, if it cannot hinder holiness, will maliciously hurt its advocates. III. Direct how to act when exposed to it: "I will consider thy testimonies." That means—1. Be the more obedient to God. 2. Have the more watchful control over words and feelings. 3. Love your enemies. 4. Pray for those who hate you. 5. Do good to them on every opportunity. 6. Be thankful that you are among the hated and not the haters. 7. Especially consider the holy testimony of Christ's forbearing patience.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 95.—Waiting counterwrought by waiting. I. Temptations in ambush. II. The saint with his Lord.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 95.—*Immunity.* I. I am in danger. II. I will attend to my duty. III. I will trust thee to deliver me.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 96.—I. An end:—"seen"; seen by one man; seen where it should not have been; seen where there was no end of boasting; seen in *all*

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perfection. II. No end:—to the extent, spirituality, perpetuity, and perfectness of the law.

*Verse* 96.—I. The Finite explored. II. The Infinite unexplored.—*W. D.*

*Verse* 96.—Perfectionism disproved by experience and inspiration.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 96.—*Perfection—perfect and imperfect.* I. Loud professions of perfection arise from ignorance (of self, or of God's requirements). II. Are peculiarly liable to collapse: "I have seen an end." III. Are best corrected by a survey of the breadth of the divine law.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 97.—I. Unusual Exclamation. II. Unusual Application.—*W. D.*

*Verse* 97.—Indescribable love and insatiable thought. The action and reaction of affection and meditation.

*Verse* 97.—I. The object of love: "thy law." II. The degree of that love: "oh, how love I," etc. III. The evidence of that love: "it is my meditation," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 97.—*Love to the law.* I. An ardent confession of love. II. An unanswerable evidence of love.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 97 (*first clause*).—Vehemency of love for God's word. I. Its recognisable marks. 1. Profound reverence for the authority of the word. 2. Admiration for its holiness. 3. Jealousy for its honour; God's servant feels acute pain when men show it any slight. 4. Respect for its wholeness; he would not divorce precepts from promises, nor ignore a single statement in it. 5. Indefatigability in its study. 6. Eager desire to obey it. 7. Forwardness in praising it. 8. Activity in spreading it abroad. II. Its reasonableness. 1. The word well deserves it. 2. It is a proof of true intelligence. 3. It is not less than a regard for our own interest demands. III. Its requisiteness to the true worship of God. Men sneeringly call such an affection bibliolatry, as though it were the worship of a book. In truth, it is an essential element in the due worship of God. For—1. Without it there cannot be the faith which honours God. 2. It is involved in that love to God which constitutes the very essence of worship. 3. It is itself an act of homage, that a worshipper dare not withhold.—*J. F.*

*Verses* 97—100.—*Spiritual wisdom.* I. God's word the source of surpassing wisdom—excelling that of "mine enemies," "my teachers," "the ancients." II. The three methods of acquiring this wisdom—love, meditation, practice. III. The one Giver of this wisdom: "Thou:" ver. 98.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 98.—Constant communion with truth the student's road to proficiency.

*Verses* 98, 99, 100.—The truly wise man. 1. *The source of his wisdom.* The word of "the only wise God," here described as (1) Thy commandments. (2) Thy testimonies. (3) Thy precepts. 2. *The increase of his wisdom.* It arises from (1) The abiding indwelling of the word: "ever with me," v. 98. (2) Meditation upon the word, v. 99. (3) Obedience to the word, v. 100. 3. *The measure of his wisdom.* (1) Wiser than his enemies, whose wisdom was "not from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish." (2) Wiser than his teachers, whose wisdom was "of this world." (3) Wiser than the ancients, whose wisdom was that of unsanctified age and experience.—*W. H. J. Page, of Chelsea*, 1882.

*Verse* 99.—The surest way to excellence. I. A good subject: "thy testimonies." II. A good method: "are my meditations."

*Verse* 100.—Antiquity no security for truth as contrasted with revelation: old age no proof of wisdom as contrasted with holy living: open confession no evidence of boasting as contrasted with sullen pride.

*Verse* 100.—Obedience the high road to understanding.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 100.—Obedience the key of knowledge. John vii. 17.

*Verse* 101.—Self-restraint needful to piety.

*Verse* 102.—Divine teaching necessary to secure perseverance, and effectual to that end.

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*Verse* 102.—Consider,—I. The path appointed for men to walk in: "Thy judgments." 1. Right path. 2. Clean path. 3. Pleasant path. 4. Safe path. 5. The end—eternal glory. II. The persistent pursuit of it: "I have not departed." 1. Persecution would drive from it. 2. Pleasures would allure from it. 3. The flesh would weary in it. 4. But the true believer determines to hold on his way to the end. 5. And carefully watches his steps lest they depart. III. The preserving power that holds the traveller to it: "For thou hast taught me." 1. The traveller walks with God, and receives instruction by the special illumination of the Holy Spirit. 2. The choice property of this teaching is, not only that it makes wise, but that it captivates the soul, strengthens it, and holds it to a holy obedience.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 103.—Experience in religion the source of enjoyment in it; or, I. Tasting the word: its sweetness. II. Declaring the word with the mouth: its greater sweetness.

*Verse* 103.—I. The word is positively sweet: "sweet to my taste." II. Comparatively sweet: "sweeter than honey." III. Superlatively sweet: "how sweet," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 103.—The comparison, setting forth the precious property of sweetness in the word: "Sweeter than honey." "Better than honey," would not do as well. It is—1. The purest sweetness; even precepts and rebukes. 2. Uncloying sweetness. 3. Always a beneficial sweetness. 4. A specially grateful sweetness—in affliction, in the hour of death.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 103.—*Spiritual delicacy.* I. The taste needed to relish it. II. The life that alone is nourished by it. III. The rare enjoyment derived from it.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 103.—I. It is sweet. II. Let us enjoy it. III. The best effects will follow. George Herbert says:—

> "O Book! infinite sweetness! let my heart
> Suck every letter, and a honey gain,
> Precious for any grief in any part;
> To clear the breast, to mollify all pain."

*Verse* 103.—If we would taste the honey of God, we must have the palate of faith.—*A. R. Fausset.*

*Verse* 104.—The influence of the precepts. I. Upon the understanding. II. Upon the affections. III. Upon the life.

*Verse* 104.—I. The intellectual effect of the Scriptures: "I get understanding." II. Their moral effect: "I hate," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 104.—The understanding derived from God's precepts begets holy hatred, I. To the false ways of conventional morality. II. To the false ways of a formal religiousness. III. To the false ways of an erring theology. IV. To the false ways of hypocritical practice. V. To the false ways of sinful suggestions. VI. To the false ways of one's own deceitful heart.—*J. F.*

*Verses* 105—108.—I. Illumination (ver. 105). II. Decision (ver. 106). III. Testing: "I am afflicted" (ver. 107). V. Consecration (ver. 108). VI. Education: "teach me," etc. (ver. 108).

*Verse* 105.—The practical, personal, everyday use of the word of God.

*Verse* 105.—*Lamp-light.* I. The believer's dangerous night-journey through the world. II. The lamp that illumines his path. III. The eternal day towards which he travels (when the lamp will be laid aside: Rev. xxii. 5).—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 106.—Decision for God, and fit modes of expressing it.

*Verse* 106.—I. Veneration for the word. II. Consecration to the word. III. Fidelity to the word.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 106.—*Swearing and performing.* I. The usefulness of religious vows. To quicken perception; to rouse conscience; (seen in Jewish nation:

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Ex. xxiv. 37; 2 Chr. xv. 12—15; Neh. x. 28, 29; in Scottish nation—Solemn League and Covenant). II. The danger of religious vows. A vow unfulfilled, or receded from, is a moral injury: Eccl. v. 4—7. III. The safeguard of religious vows: dependence on the Spirit of God: Ezek. xi. 19, 20; 2 Cor. iv. 5.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 107.—I. A good man greatly afflicted. II. A sure cure for the ills of affliction: "Quicken me." III. A safe rule to pray by when afflicted: "according unto thy word."

*Verse* 107.—I. The "very much" afflicted. 1. The world has such—widows, orphans, etc., etc. 2. Most take their turn. II. But there is "very much" grace. 1. God's word promises the needed quickening. 2. Himself very much greater than all our needs. 3. Christ tried "in all points" has all help. III. Therefore bring "very much" faith, as the Psalmist here. 1. Keen-eyed for promises. 2. Fervent in pleading them. 3. Strong in expectation.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 108.—Consider,—I. The instructive title given to prayer and praise: "The free-will offerings of my mouth." 1. It shows the believer to be a priest: "offerings." 2. It shows the peculiarity of his service: "free-will." 3. It implies whole-hearted consecration. II. The humility portrayed in the prayer: "Accept, I beseech thee." 1. Here is no pharisaic boasting. 2. Even the free-will offering is felt to need an "I beseech thee." III. The longing desire for further instruction in order to a more perfect obedience: "Teach me thy judgments."—*J. F.*

*Verse* 108.—Free will seeking free grace.—*W. D.*

*Verse* 108.—Work for Free-willers. I. Offerings of Prayer—for each of the blessings of salvation. II. Offerings of Repudiation—of all claim to unassisted good. III. Offerings of Praise—for sovereign grace.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 109.—The soul's life in jeopardy. The life of the soul secured.

*Verses* 109, 110.—Here is,—I. David in danger of losing his life. There is but a step between him and death; for "the wicked have laid a snare" for him. Wherever he was he found some design or other laid against him; which made him say, "My soul is continually in my hand." It was not so only as a man—it is true of us all that we are exposed to the strokes of death—but as a man of war, and especially as "a man after God's own heart." II. David in no danger of losing his religion through this peril; for, 1. He "doth not forget the law," and therefore is likely to persevere. 2. He hath not yet erred from God's precepts, and therefore it is to be hoped he will not.—*M. Henry.*

*Verse* 110.—Various kinds of snares, and the one way of escaping them.

*Verse* 110.—Consider,—I. Some of the snares set for saints by sinners. 1. Doctrinal snares, by intellectual sinners. 2. False accusations, by malignant sinners. 3. False flatteries, by deceitful sinners. 4. False charity, by a large number of sinners nowadays. II. The secure safeguard for a saint's safety: "I erred not from thy precepts." Obedience to God gives security, because—1. The snares are then suspected and watched against. 2. The feet cannot become entangled by them. 3. God keeps him who keeps his word.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 111.—I. Estate. II. Entering upon it. III. Entail upon it. IV. Enjoyment of it.

*Verse* 111.—Notice,—I. How rich the Psalmist was determined to be: "Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage." Rich,—1. In knowledge. 2. In holiness. 3. In comfort. 4. In companionship, for God's company goes with his word. 5. In hope. II. How he clung to his wealth: "For ever." 1. He hurt none by so doing; he could give generously his portion, and yet not waste. 2. He was right; for he had the only wealth of which an everlasting possession is possible. 3. He was wise. III. How he rejoiced in his wealth: "They are the rejoicing of my heart." 1. Here is internal and deep joy; not always possible to the possession of wealth.

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2. Pure, unalloyed joy; it is never so with other wealth. 3. Safe joy; other joy is dangerous. 4. Unlosable joy.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 112.—Heart-leanings. Personality, pressure, inclination, performance, constancy, perpetuity.

*Verse* 112.—The godly man's obedience. I. Its reality. 1. "To perform"; not words or feelings merely; but deeds. 2. "Thy statutes"; not human inventions, nor self conceits, nor conventional maxims. II. Its cordiality: "inclined my heart." 1. Heart inclination is requisite for pleasing a heart-searching God. 2. And to make obedience easy and even delightful. 3. "I have," he says; was it therefore his doing? Yes. Was it his work alone? No. See verse 36. 4. The proofs. (1) Universality: "statutes," the whole of them. (2) Uniformity: "alway." III. Its constancy: "even unto the end." 1. Though a man should be cautious when planning for the future, yet this life-long purpose is right, wise, and safe. 2. Nor can he purpose less, if holy fervency fill the heart. 3. It is no more than what God and consistency demand.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 113.—The thought of the age, and the truth of all ages.

*Verse* 113.—I. The object of hatred. II. The object of love. Or—I. Love the cause of hatred. II. Hatred the effect of love.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 113.—"*Vain thoughts.*" What they are. Whence they arise. The mischief they cause. How they should be treated.—*W. H. J. P.*

*Verse* 113.—How the believer—1. Is troubled by vain thoughts. A frequent and painful experience. 2. Does not tolerate vain thoughts Some suffer them to lodge within; he is anxious to expel them. 3. Triumphs over vain thoughts. By his love to the law of God. His prayer is—

> "With thoughts of Christ and things divine,
> Fill up this foolish heart of mine."
>
> —*W. H. J. P.*

*Verse* 114.—Our protection *from* danger—"hiding-place"; *in* danger—"shield"; *before* danger—"I hope."

*Verse* 114.—"*Hiding-place.*" Secrecy to conceal us. Capacity to hold us. Safety. Comfort.—*T. Manton.*

*Verse* 114.—*Hiding and hoping.* I. A hiding-place needed. II. A hiding-place provided (Isa. xxv. 14; xxxii. 2). III. A hiding-place used.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 114.—I. The refuge provided: "Thou art," etc. II. The refuge revealed: "In thy word." III. The refuge found: "I hope," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 114.—"*Thou art my hiding place.*" I. In thy grace, from condemnation. II. In thy compassion, from sorrow. III. In thy succour, from temptation. IV. In thy power, from opposition. V. In thy fulness, from want.—*W. J.*

*Verse* 115.—I. Ill company hinders piety. II. Piety quits ill company. III. Piety, in compelling this departure, acts as God will do at the last.

*Verse* 115.—Evil companionships incompatible with genuine righteousness. I. They necessitate concealment and compromise. II. They destroy the capability of communion with God, and the relish for spiritual things. III. They blunt the sensitiveness of conscience. IV. They involve deliberate disobedience to God.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 116.—I. Upholding promised. II. Needful for holy living. III. The preventive of shameful acts.

*Verse* 116.—"*Uphold me according unto thy word,*" etc. 1. The Psalmist pleads the promise of God, his dependence upon the promise, and his expectation from it: "*Uphold me according unto thy word,*" which word I hope in. and if it be not performed I shall be "ashamed of my hope." 2. He pleads the great need he had of God's grace, and the great advantage it would be to him: "Uphold me, that I may live"; intimating that he could not live without the grace of God.—*M. Henry.*

*Verse* 117.—I. Upholding—God's holding us up. It implies a danger, and that danger takes many forms. The believer's life may be described as

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walking in uprightness; he is a pilgrim. He needs upholding, for—1. The way is slippery. 2. Our feet make the danger as well as the way. 3. Cunning foes seek to trip us up. 4. Sometimes the difficulty is not caused by the way, but by the height to which God may elevate us. 5. The prayer is all the more needful because the most of people do not keep upright. II. Two blessed things that come out of this holding up. 1. We shall be safe for ourselves, as examples, and as pillars of the church. 2. We shall be watchful and sensitive: "I will have respect unto thy statutes continually." Without this no man is safe. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1657: "My Hourly Prayer."

*Verse* 117.—*Hold thou me up*," etc. I. The good man is up. II. The good man wishes to keep up. III. The good man prays to be held up. IV. The good man knows that divine support is abundantly sufficient.—*W. J.*

*Verse* 117.—I. Dependence for the future: "Hold," etc. II. Resolution for the future: "I will have," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 118.—Sin and falsehood: their connection, punishment, and cure.

*Verse* 118.—I. Hearken to the tramp of God's armies. In nature; providence; angelic hosts of last day. II. The mangled victims. Cunning deceivers specially obnoxious to God. Examples: Balaam, Pharaoh, Rome, the deceiver of the nations. III. The warnings to us of this Aceldama. Repent. Avoid deceit. Mind God's landmarks. Hide in Christ.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 118.—God's punishment of the wicked though awfully severe is just and necessary. I. It is due as the merited wages of iniquity. II. It is demanded by the position of God as moral governor, and by his character as righteous. III. It is necessary to mark the real worth of righteousness and its reward. If the wicked are not punished, the full worth of righteousness cannot appear. IV. In the nature of the case, it is absolutely unavoidable, except upon one condition, namely, the gift of genuine repentance and holiness after death; *that* no man has any right to expect, nor has God given the slightest intimation that he will bestow it. V. Hell lies in the bosom of sin; and if the wicked were taken to heaven, they would carry hell thither. Heaven supplies not the things in which the wicked delight, while it abounds in those they can neither understand nor sympathise with.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 118 (*second clause*).—The deceits of the wicked are all falsehoods. I. The world they embrace is a false Delilah. II. The pleasure they enjoy is a Satanic snare. III. Their formal religiousness is a vain delusion. IV. Their conceits of God are self-invented lies.—*J. F.*

*Verses* 118—120.—*Saved by fear.* I. The wrath of God revealed against sin. II. The judgment of God executed upon sinners. III. The fear of God created in the heart.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 119.—The saint's acquiescence in God's judgments.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 119.—I. Comparison of the wicked to dross. II. Comparison of their doom to the putting away of dross. III. The saint's admiration of divine justice as seen in the rejection of the wicked.

*Verse* 119.—God's putting away the wicked like dross. I. God's judgments are a searching and separating fire. II. The final judgment of the great day will complete the separating process. III. The great result will be, the true metal and the dross, each gathered to its *own* place.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 120.—The judgments of God on the wicked cause in the righteous, I. Love. II. Awe. III. Fear.

*Verse* 120.—I. Describe the true character of the fear. 1. It is the fear of reverence for God's authority and power. 2. It is the fear of horror against sin as meriting judgment. II. Show its compatibility with filial love. 1. The more we love God the more firmly we believe in the certainty and awfulness of his judgments. 2. The more we love God the more will we

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fear to arouse his chastising rod against ourselves. 3. In fact, if we love not God, we shall have no fear lest sin should involve us in judgment. III. Commend it. 1. As it proves a just sense of sin's desert. 2. As it shows a true appreciation of God's righteousness. 3. As it is not a fear that hath torment, but a fear which increases watchfulness, and walks hand in hand with perfect confidence in saving grace.—*J. F.*

*Verses* 121, 122.—*The double appeal.* I. Of conscious integrity: "I have done judgment," etc. II. Of conscious deficiency: "Be surety for thy servant for good."—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 122.—I. Suretyship entreated. II. Good expected. III. Obligation acknowledged: "thy servant."

*Verse* 122 (*first clause*).—After explaining the Psalmist's meaning as shown in the preceding verse, this sentence may be used for a sermon upon the Suretyship of Christ, by a reference to Heb. vii. 22. I. A Surety for good wanted—the deeply felt, though, perhaps, undefined want of a sin-burdened soul. 1. The mere statement of a gratuitous pardon on the part of God is not thoroughly believable to such a soul, nor, if it could be believed in, would it give peace to the conscience. For, on the one hand, the pardon could not be perceived as just, nor as consistent with God's necessary hatred of sin, yet the conscience demands this perception; on the other hand, mere pardon does not show how the obligation to a perfect fulfilment of God's law, as righteousness, can be met, yet the conscience demands to see this before it can be satisfied to realize peace. Luther's experience. 2. Now the Scriptures tell us that God "justifies the ungodly," and that his "righteousness" is declared in his justifying sinners: Rom. iii. 25. He can forgive sins with justice. He can treat sinners as righteous persons, and yet be righteous in doing so. How? By a Surety. Therefore, a Surety is the real want. II. A Surety existent. Jesus is the Surety. 1. He undertook to bear our obligation to the law's penalty, and fulfilled it in death. Thus pardon, though mercy to us, is an act of justice to Christ. 2. He undertook our obligation to a perfect obedience, and satisfied for that in his fulfilment of the law; thus for God to treat us as righteous is only just to Christ. 3. God has shown his satisfaction with the office of Christ, and with his work, by the resurrection and glorification of Christ. Hence a well-accredited and efficient Surety exists. III. A Surety nigh at hand. 1. In the gospel, Christ as Surety comes to the sinner as truly as though he himself left his throne and came in his own person. 2. Thus, he is so close that a sinner has but to receive the gospel into his heart and he receives Christ. 3. Christ received as a Surety is the Surety for whosoever receives him.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 123.—Holy expectation—long maintained, in danger of failing; this fact pleaded; reasons for never renouncing it.

*Verses* 124, 125.—*The servant of God.* I. Making profession: "I am thy servant." II. Making confession—of guilt, dulness, ignorance. III. Making petition—for mercy, understanding, and teaching.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 124.—Heavenly instruction a great mercy.

*Verse* 124.—I. His confidence in divine mercy. II. His submission to divine authority. III. His prayer for divine teaching.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 124.—A Perfect Prayer. I. As to the matter of it. 1. Here is nothing superfluous; no petition for wealth, nor for honours, nor for anything the worldling covets. 2. Here is nothing wanting; "Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy" comprehends everything the guilty soul needs; "Teach me thy statutes" comprehends all a saint needs to be anxious for. II. As to the manner of it. 1. It is direct and definite. 2. It is simple and fervent. 3. It is reverent yet bold. III. As to the spirit of it. 1. "Deal with thy *servant*"; a sense of obligation; a feeling of devotedness; a spirit of consecration to holy work. 2. "Deal . . . according to thy mercy"; a sense of unworthiness; becoming humility; submissiveness to

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the divine will as to what form the mercy shall take; great faith in the mercy, its freeness and sufficiency. 3. "Teach me thy statutes." Longing for holiness, sense of ignorance, of weakness, of dependence upon special divine spiritual influence.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 125.—I. An office accepted. II. Fitness requested. III. Discernment desired.

*Verse* 125.—I. A cheerful acknowledgment: "I am thy servant." II. A desire implied—to serve more perfectly. III. A need recognized—Divine instruction in holy service. IV. A plea urged: "I am thy servant," therefore "Teach me," etc.—*W. H. J. P.*

*Verses* 126—128.—I. A terrible fact: "They have made void thy law": ver. 126. II. Two blessed inferences: "Therefore," "Therefore," etc.: verses 127, 128.

*Verse* 126.—They make void the law, by denying inspiration, by exalting tradition, by antinomianism, by scepticism, by indifference, etc.

*Verse* 126.—1. There are times when sin is specially active and dominant. 2. Such times reveal the dependence of the church upon God. 3. Such times awaken the desires of the church for the intervention of God. 4. Such times are the times when God does arise to plead his own cause.—*W. H. J. P.*

*Verse* 126.—I. The work anticipated—the vindication of the divine law. II. The work delayed. III. The work executed: "It is time," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 127.—The world's assault upon the truth a reason for our loving it.

*Verse* 127.—I. The object of love: "Thy commandments." II. The degree of love: "above gold," etc. III. The reason of this love: "therefore," etc., because its object must ultimately prevail.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 127.—God's will *versus* the golden idol. I. God's commandments are better than gold. II. The love of them is proportionably nobler. III. The unmeasurable superiority of character they produce.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 128 (*first clause*).—This view should be taken of all divine precepts in their bearing. I. Christ-ward. II. Self-ward. III. World-ward. IV. Church-ward. V. Heaven-ward.—*W. J.*

*Verse* 128.—The Bible right. I. Its science is correct. II. Its history is true. III. Its promises are genuine. IV. Its morality is perfect. V. Its doctrines are divine.—*W. W.*

*Verse* 128.—Learn four lessons,—I. It is a good thing when wicked men do not praise the truth they cannot love. II. It is a suspicious circumstance when they are found speaking well of any part of it; it is a Judas' kiss in order to betray its interests. III. It must be right to accept and love what the wicked oppose. IV. It is always safe to be on the opposite side to them.—*J. F.*

*Verses* 129—136.—In this division the Psalmist—I. Praises God's word. II. Shows his affection to it. III. Prays for grace to keep it. IV. Mourns for those who do not.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 129.—The wonderful character of the word a reason for obedience. So wonderfully pure, just, balanced, elevating. So much for our own benefit, for the good of society, and for the divine glory.

*Verse* 129.—I. What is wonderful in God's word should be believed. II. What is believed should be obeyed.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 129.—"*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*" 1. The *facts* which they record are wonderful—so wonderful, that, if the book recording them were now published for the first time, there would be no bounds to the avidity and curiosity with which it would be sought and perused. 2. The *morality* which they inculcate is wonderful. 3. If you turn from the morality to the *doctrines* of the Bible, your admiration will rather increase than diminish at the contents of the singular book. 4. These testimonies are wonderful for *the style* in which they are written. 5. They are wonderful for *their preservation* in the world. 6. They are wonderful for the *effects* which they have produced.—*Hugh Hughes*, 1833.



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*Verse* 129.—"*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*" The *ceremonial law* is wonderful, because the mystery of our redemption by the blood of Christ is pointed out in it. 2. The *prophecies* are wonderful, as predicting things, humanly speaking, so uncertain, and at such great distance of time, with so much accuracy. 3. The *decalogue* is wonderful, as containing in a very few words all the principles of justice and charity. 4. Were we to go to the *New Testament*, here wonders rise on wonders! All is astonishing; but the Psalmist could not have had this in view.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 129 (*first clause*).—I. Let us look at five of the wonders of the Bible. 1. Its authority. It prefaces every statement with a "Thus saith the Lord." 2. Its light. 3. Its power—it has a convincing, awakening, drawing, life-giving power. 4. Its depth. 5. Its universal adaptation. II. Indicate three practical uses. 1. Study the Bible daily. 2. Pray for the Spirit to grave it on your heart with a pen of iron. 3. Practise it daily.—*D. Macgregor.*

*Verse* 129.—To whom and in what respects are God's testimonies wonderful? I. To whom? To those, and those only, who through grace do know, believe, and experience the truth and power of them for themselves. II. In what respects wonderful, *i.e.*, astonishingly pleasing, delightful, and profitable (see ver. 174). 1. In respect of the Author and origin of them, whose they are and from whence they come. 2. In respect of the subject matter of them, which they contain and reveal. 3. In respect of the manner of language in which they are revealed and declared. 4. In respect of the multitude and variety of them suited to every case. 5. In respect of the usefulness of them, and the great benefit and advantage he received from them. 6. In the respect of the pleasure and delight he finds in them (see ver. 111). 7. In respect of the final design, intent, and end of them: viz., eternal life, salvation, and glory.—*Samuel Medley*, 1738—1799.

*Verse* 130.—I. The essential light of the word. II. The dawn of it in the soul. III. The great benefit of its advancing day.

*Verse* 130.—I. The source of divine light to man: "Thy words." II. Its force. It forces an entrance into the heart. III. Its direction: "unto the simple." IV. Its effect: "it giveth understanding."—*G. R.*

*Verse* 130.—*A Bible Society Sermon.* I. Evidence from history and from personal experience that God's word has imparted the light of civilization, liberty, holiness. II. Argument drawn from hence for the further spread of the word of God.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 130.—The Self-evidencing Virtue of God's Word. I. Prove it. "The entrance of thy word giveth light." If this be true, God's word is light; for only light can give light. But light is self-evidencing; it needs nothing to show its presence and its value but itself; so the word of God, to show its own truth and divinity to the believer. 1. His conscience proves it; in its convictions of sin; in its peace through the atoning blood. 2. His heart proves it; in its outgoings of love to the God, the Christ, and the righteousness revealed. 3. His experience in affliction and temptation proves it; in the solace and in the strength given by the word. II. Answer an objection. "If God's word were self-evidencing as light is, then everyone would acknowledge it to be truth." Answer, No; for the law holds good in universal experience, that the "entrance" only of light gives light. Light cannot enter a blind man. 1. The Scriptures teach that men by nature are blind. 2. If all men did perceive, by merely reading and hearing the word, that it was light and truth, paradoxical as it may seem, the word would not be truth. 3. Hence the want of universal acknowledgment is not an objection, but a confirmation. III. Show its importance. 1. It makes the believer independent of church authority for his faith. 2. He need not trouble to examine books of evidence; his faith is valid enough without them. 3. He who receives the word into his soul shall be satisfied of its truth and value.—*J. F.*

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*Verse* 131.—Panting for holiness. A rare hunger; the evidence of much grace, and the pledge of glory.

*Verse* 132.—I. Look. II. Love. III. Use and wont.

*Verse* 132.—Fellowship with the righteous. I. There are some who love God's name. II. His mercy is the source of all the goodness they experience. III. The Lord has been always accustomed to deal mercifully with them. IV. His mercy towards them should encourage us to implore mercy for ourselves. V. We should be anxious to secure the mercy that is peculiar to them. VI. We should be content if God deals with us as he has always dealt with his people.—*W. Jay.*

*Verse* 132.—*Divine use and wont.* I. God is accustomed to look upon and be merciful toward his people. II. We are stirred up to specially desire such merciful dealings in time of affliction. III. Love to God qualifies us for these loving looks and merciful dealings.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 132.—Notice,—I. The mark of true believers: "Those that love thy name." II. God's custom of dealing with them: "Be merciful as thou usest to do." III. Their individual and earnest solicitude: "Look thou upon me."—*J. F.*

*Verse* 133.—I. A holy life is no work of chance, it is a masterpiece of *order*—the order of conformity to the prescribed rule; there is arithmetical and geometrical order; the proportional order; the order of relation; an order of period: holiness, as to its order, is seasonable, suitable. II. The rule of this order: "in thy word." III. The director chosen. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 878: "A Well-ordered Life."

*Verse* 133.—I. Order in outward life desired. II. Order according to the divine idea. III. Order in the government within.

*Verse* 133.—I. Help needed. 1. To avoid sin. 2. To be holy. II. Help sought. 1. From below: "thy word." 2. From above: "order," etc., and "let not," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 133.—Sin's sway in the soul. I. Fervently deprecated. 1. Realization of the horrors of its rule. 2. Recognition of the better power. 3. Thorough exclusion sought. II. Wisely combated. 1. Practicalness as well as prayerfulness. 2. Regard had to little "steps." 3. Steps to be governed by divine rule. 4. System not trusted apart from God.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 133.—Notice,—I. The right path for human feet: "In thy word." II. The needed help to control the steps: "Order my steps." III. The perverting power of a dominant sin: "Let not any," etc.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 134.—What sins may be produced by oppression. What obedience ought to come from those who are set free.

*Verse* 134.—I. The course to be pursued: "thy precepts." II. The opposition to that course: "the oppression of men." 1. Human opinions. 2. Human examples. 3. Human sympathies. 4. Interests. 5. Persecutions. III. The resistance to that opposition: "Deliver me, so will I," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 134.—*Hindrances removed.* I. The impeding influence of persecution. II. The prayer of the persecuted one. III. The conduct of the delivered one (Luke i. 74, 75).—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 134.—I. How some men oppress their fellows. By the laws they make—as statesmen. By the books they write—as authors. By the tyranny they exercise—as masters. By the lives they live—as professors. By the sermons they deliver—as *ministers!* II. How the prayer of the oppressed may be answered. By the gift of wise and good statesmen. By increase of sound literature. By the conversion or removal of hard masters. By a baptism of the Spirit on the church.—*W. W.*

*Verse* 135.—I. A choice position: "thy servant." II. A choice delight: "thy face to shine." III. A choice privilege: "teach me thy statutes."

*Verse* 135.—I. God *in* the word: "Thy word." II. God *for* the word: "Teach me," etc. III. God *with* the word: "Make thy face," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 135.—*Sunshine.* I. The light in which we can best learn our

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lessons—God's favour shown in pardon, justification, adoption, assurance, etc. II. The lessons we should learn in the light—grace is productive of holiness.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 135.—I. A rich historic promise (Num. vi. 25). Its sublime origin and associations. II. The *new* prayer born of it. 1. Looks up for the face Divine; the same in its majestic sweetness that has watched generations decay since the word was first spoken. 2. Asks to know its shinings. Light of fatherhood, etc. III. The *old* prayer repeated: "Teach me thy statutes." Last time in the psalm. 1. Our need of teaching—oft repeated prayer. 2. The intimate connection between obedience and the shinings of God's face.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 136.—Abundant sorrow for abounding sin. Other men's sins the saint's own sorrows. He thinks of the good God provoked, of the sinners themselves debased, of their death, and their perdition.

*Verse* 136.—I. Occasion of his grief: "they keep not thy law." II. Extent of his grief: "rivers," etc. See examples in Jeremiah, Ezra, Paul, Christ himself. III. Effect of his grief. To warn, teach, invite, and exhort them—as in his psalms.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 136.—*Sacred tears.* I. The world sinning. II. The church weeping. III. It is time the world began to weep for itself.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 136.—I weep, because, 1. Of the dishonour done to the Law-giver. 2. Of the injury done to the law-breaker. 3. Of the wrong done to the law-abiding.

"That kingly prophet, that wept so plentifully for his own offences (Psalm vi. 6), had yet floods of tears left to bewail his people's" (Psalm cxix. 136).—*Thomas Adams.* "Benedetti, a Franciscan monk, author of the *Stabat Mater*, one day was found weeping, and when asked the reason of his tears, he exclaimed, 'I weep because Love goes about unloved.'"—*W. H. J. P.*

*Verses* 137, 138.—*Solemn contemplation.* I. The contemplation of the deep and awful display of the divine character is good for the soul. II. It will lead to a conviction of the righteousness of God's character and administration. III. It will result in loyal submission.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 137.—A consideration of divine righteousness. Convinces us of sin, reconciles us to trying providences, excites a desire to imitate, arouses to reverent adoration.

*Verse* 137.—God is righteous. I. In his commands. II. In his threatenings. III. In his chastisements. IV. In his judgments. V. In his promises.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 138.—"*Very faithful.*" Based on a faithful covenant; confirmed by faithful promises; carried out by a faithful Redeemer; enjoyed hitherto; relied on for the future. "Though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful."

*Verse* 139.—"*Zeal.*" I. Consuming self. II. Inflamed by that which would naturally quench it. III. Fed upon God's words.

*Verse* 139.—"*Zeal.*" I. Flourishing in an unpromising atmosphere. II. Attaining an astonishing growth. III. Accomplishing a blessed work—the consumption of self.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 139.—I. The object of his zeal: "Thy words." II. The occasion of his zeal: "Mine enemies," etc. III. The fervour of his zeal: "My zeal hath consumed me."—*G. R.*

*Verse* 140.—I. An awakened sinner adoring the holy law. II. A saint loving it because the pure love the pure. III. A saint among sinners loving the law all the more for its contrast.

*Verse* 140.—I. The crystal stream. 1. Flows from under the throne. 2. Mirrors heaven. 3. Undefiled through the ages. 4. Nourishes holiness as it flows. II. The enraptured pilgrim. 1. Keeping by its brink. 2. Delighted with its lucid depths. 3. Pleased with its mirrored revelations—self, heaven, God. 4. Cleansed and refreshed by its waters.—*W. B. H.*

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*Verse* 140.—I. *The purity of God's Word.* 1. It proceeds from a perfectly pure source: "*Thy* word." 2. It reveals a purity otherwise unknown. 3. It treats impure subjects with absolute purity. 4. It inculcates the most perfect purity. 5. It produces such purity in those who are subject to its power.—II. *The love which its purity inspires in gracious souls.* 1. They love it because, while it reveals their natural impurity, it shows them how to escape from it. 2. They love it because it conforms them to its own purity. 3. They love it because to a pure heart the purity of the word is one of its chief commendations.—III. *The evidences of this love to the pure word.* 1. Desire to possess it in its purity. 2. Subjection to its spirit and teachings. 3. Zeal for its honour and diffusion.—*W. H. J. P.*

*Verses* 141—144.—*A mournful song and a joyful refrain.* Stanza I. "I am small and despised." Refrain. The everlasting righteousness of God. Stanza II. "Trouble and anguish have seized me." Refrain. The everlasting righteousness of God.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 141.—Here is—1. David pious, and yet poor. He was a man after God's own heart, and yet "small and despised" in his own account and in account of many others. 2. David poor and yet pious; "small and despised" for his strict and serious godliness; yet his conscience can witness for him, that he "did not forget God's precepts."—*M. Henry.*

*Verse* 141.—I. The source of man's littleness is in himself. II. The source of his greatness is in the Divine word. Hence the greatest philosopher is a small man compared with the most uneducated whose delight is in the law of God, and who meditates, etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 141.—I. A little scholar. II. A quick learner. III. A firm remembrancer.

*Verse* 141.—"*Unknown, yet well known.*" I. The estimate formed of the believer by the world. II. The estimate formed of the believer by himself. III. The profession made by the believer to God. IV. On a review, a revised estimate of the believer: 1 Cor. i. 27; James ii. 5.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 142.—Righteousness, immutability, and truth combined in the revelation of God.

*Verse* 143.—Mingled emotions.

*Verse* 143.—I. The dark cloud. Trouble, etc. II. His silver lining. Yet, etc.

*Verse* 143.—I. The saint cast into prison. 1. The jailers: "Trouble and anguish." 2. Their proceeding: "take hold" and make him fast. II. Songs in the night. 1. Blessed theme: "thy commandments." 2. Ecstatic melodies: "delights." III. Let the prisoners hear them. 1. Pain-held, sin-held, despair-held. 2. It is matter and melody to open prisons.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 143.—Consider,—I. The excellency of the word, in that it gives delight when trouble and anguish oppress. II. The great kindness of God in so framing his word that it can give delight at such a time, and under such circumstances. III. The disposition of the believer to resort to the word for delight, when others give themselves over to vain grief and despondency. IV. The blessed position of the believer, in that he need never be without joy.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 144.—Everlasting righteousness revealed in the word, and producing everlasting life in believers.

*Verse* 144.—I. Eternal truths. II. Eternal life dependent upon them. III. A cry from amid these everlasting hills.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 144 (*last clause*).—I. Consider the prayer in its simplicity. 1. It is suitable for the awakened sinner. 2. For the Christian struggling against temptation. 3. For the suffering believer. 4. For the worker 5. For aspiring minds in the church of God. 6. For expiring saints. II. The prayer more fully opened up. 1. Here is want confessed. 2. The prayer is evidently put upon the footing of free grace: "Give." III. Lay bare

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the argument in the prayer. 1. The word of God, when practically and experimentally understood, is a pledge of life. 2. The word of God is the incorruptible "seed" which liveth and abideth for ever. 3. It is the food of life. 4. It is the very flower and crown and glory of true life. 5. It is righteous. 6. It is everlasting. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1572: "Alive."

*Verses* 145—148.—*The cry.* I. Whence it came: from my heart. II. Whither it went: to the Lord. III. When it was heard: at dawn and dark. IV. What it sought: hearing, salvation. V. What it promised: obedience. VI. How it was sustained: by hope in God's word.—*C. A. D.*

*Verses* 145, 146.—The soul's cry. I. The depth from which it rose. II. The height it reached.

*Verses* 145, 146.—*Childlike prayer.* I. In its ring: "I cried." II. In its directness: "to thee." III. In its outburst. "whole heart." IV. In its outcries: "hear me"; "save me." V. In its promise of better behaviour: "I *will* keep thy statutes."—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 145.—I. The model of prayer: "I cried with my whole heart." II. The object of prayer: "Hear me, O Lord." III. The accompaniment of prayer: "I will keep thy statutes."

*Verse* 146.—I. Prayer remembered. II. Prayer continued: "Save me." III. Prayer yielding fruit: "I shall keep," etc.

*Verse* 146.—*Salvation.* I. A likely path to it—prayer: cry on. II. The proper place for it: "unto thee"; not man, not the heart. III. A sound view of it: "keep thy testimonies." Not to escape hell, or gain heaven, but to please and love God.—*W. B. H.*

*Verses* 147, 148.—I. The heavenly companions: prayer and meditation. Inseparable. Mutually helpful. II. Their favourite seasons: times of stillness; night; the hour before day. III. Their volume and night-lamp: "Thy word"; "Hope." Or—I. A grand plea: "Thy lovingkindness." Who can match it? Who can measure it? Who can mar it? II. An insignificant pleader: "my voice." What can "my voice" ever say to keep step with "thy lovingkindness"? Asking too much out of the question. III. A clever petition ("according to thy judgment"); requesting life; stolen from God's mouth. God's lovingkindness is matched by God's own promise.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 147.—Observe in this David's diligence. I. That it was a personal, closet, or secret prayer: "I cried"; I alone, with thee in secret. II. That it was an early morning prayer: "I prevented the dawning of the morning." III. That it was a vehement and earnest prayer; for it is expressed by crying.—*T. Manton.*

*Verse* 147.—*Early rising commended.* I. A fit time for prayer. II. For reading the word. III. For indulging the emotions excited by it: "I hoped in thy word."

*Verse* 148.—"The Inexhaustibleness of the Bible." A sermon by Henry Melvill, at "The Golden Lecture." 1850.

*Verse* 148.—*Meditation.* Appropriate time, and fruitful subject.

*Verse* 148.—Meditation in the word well worth self-denial and care on the part of the Christian. I. Without meditation reading is a waste of time and an indignity offered to the word. II. Meditation with prayer, but not prayer without meditation, will discover the sense of the word, when all other means fail; and it has this advantage, that the meaning sinks into the mind. III. Meditation extracts sweetness from the promises, and nourishment from the whole truth. IV. Meditation makes a wise teacher and an efficient worker of one who has little natural skill or learning. V. Meditation subjects the soul to the sanctifying power of the word. VI. Meditation is an invitation to the Holy Spirit to bless the soul, for he is closely associated with the truth, and delights to see the truth honoured. —*J. F.*

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*Verse* 149.—Prayer—hearing the result of love; prayer—answering ruled by wisdom.

*Verse* 149.—*Quickening.* I. A prayer of unquestionable necessity: "quicken me." II. Twin pleas of irresistible power: "thy lovingkindness:" "thy judgment."—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 149.—The two accordings. I. The "according," to which a believer hopes to be heard by God: "Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness." 1. The believer is fully aware of his own unworthiness, and the imperfections of his prayers, therefore he would have God to accept him and interpret them after the rule of his own lovingkindness. 2. Nor does he hope in vain; God's lovingkindness overlooks the imperfections, and supplies the omissions. 3. What a blessed thing it is, that while the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, the groanings that cannot be uttered are read in their true meaning by divine lovingkindness! II. The "according" to which he expects to be answered by God: "Quicken me according to thy judgment." "Judgment" here may mean the revealed word. Then—1. He expects to be answered certainly. 2. He expects to be answered wisely. 3. He expects to be answered fully, as all his needs require. 4. He expects that every answer should quicken spiritual life, making him holy.—*J. F.*

*Verses* 150, 151.—*Against mischief-makers.* I. They press as near as they can to harm us. II. They get far from right to get more liberty to injure us. III. The Lord is nearer than they. IV. God's truth is our shield and sword.

*Verses* 150, 151.—*Foes near: the Friend nearer.* I. The believer viewing with alarm the *approach* of his foes: "They draw near." II. The believer recollecting with comfort the *presence* of his friend: "Thou art near:" Gen. xv. 1; 2 Kings vi. 14—17.—*C. A. D.*

*Verses* 150, 151.—Two beleaguering hosts. I. The host of evil: NEAR—1. Demons, godless men, spiritual foes of world and heart. 2. Mischief in their van. 3. Law and truth left far behind. 4. Seeking to narrow their lines. 5. Thus are all saints beset. II. The host of God: NEARER—Jehovah, his angels, and battalions of truths holy and immortal: "Thou and all thy commandments." 1. Entrenched in the reason: "are truth." 2. Camped in the heart's pavilion: "near." 3. Forming impregnable lines within those of the foe.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 150.—Consider—I. Whether the description here given does not apply, more or less, to all unbelievers in Christ: "They that follow after mischief." 1. Some men undoubtedly and of set purpose do follow after mischief; they make themselves the tempters of others, and delight in it. 2. Others, who do not delight in it, yet cannot help the mischievous effect of their example. 3. The very morality of many unbelievers enables them to carry the pernicious influence of their unbelief where the immorally wicked cannot come. 4. Even regular attendants at public worship may by their indecision encourage others in delay. II. The dangerous position of all to whom the description, in any measure, belongs: "They are far from thy law." 1. They are so, in that they are unbelievers; for "this is his commandment, that we shall believe," etc. 2. They are so, in that they are a cause of evil to others; for we are commanded to love and do good. 3. To be far from God's law is to be nigh unto God's righteous wrath. 4. For the sake of others, as well as their own, men should believe in Christ, and through faith become sanctified.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 151 (*last clause*).—The commandments of the Lord are true in principle; they lead to true living, if carried out; they truly reward the obedient; they never lead to falsehood, nor cause to be deluded.

*Verse* 152.—Knowledge of the word. I. It is well to know it as God's own word. II. As founded in truth. III. As founded forever. IV. The earlier we know this the better.

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*Verses* 153—159.—The two considers. The subjects, the prayers, the arguments.

*Verses* 153, 154.—Here—I. David prays for succour in distress. "Is any afflicted? let him pray"; let him pray as David doth here. 1. He hath an eye to God's pity, and prays, "*Consider mine affliction*"; take it unto thy thoughts, and all the circumstances, and sit not by as one unconcerned. God is never unmindful of his people's afflictions, but he will have us to "put him in remembrance" (Isai. xliii. 26), to spread our case before him, and then leave it to his compassionate consideration to do in it as in his wisdom he shall think fit, in his own time and way. 2. He has an eye to God's power, and prays, "*Deliver me,*" and again, "*Deliver me.*" Consider my troubles and bring me out of them. God has promised deliverance (Ps. l. 15), and we may pray for it with submission to his will, and with regard to his glory, that we may serve him the better. 3. He has an eye to God's righteousness, and prays, "*Plead my cause*": be thou my patron and advocate, and take me for thy client. David had a just cause, but his adversaries were many and mighty, and he was in danger of being run down by them: he therefore begs of God to clear his integrity, and silence their false accusations. If God do not plead his people's cause, who will? He is righteous, and they commit themselves to him, and therefore he will do it, and do it effectually: Isai. li. 22; Jer. l. 34. 4. He has an eye to God's grace, and prays, "*Quicken me.*" Lord, I am weak, and unable to bear my troubles; my spirit is apt to droop and sink: Oh, that thou wouldst revive and comfort me, till the deliverance is wrought! II. He pleads his dependence upon the word of God, and his devotedness to his conduct. "*Quicken*" and "*deliver me according to thy word*" of promise; "*for I do not forget thy precepts.*" The closer we cleave to the word of God, both as our rule and as our stay, the more assurance we may have of deliverance in due time.—*M. Henry.*

*Verse* 153.—*The sick man's prayer.* I. The medicine remembered. II. The physician sent for. III. The physician considering the case. IV. The healing wrought.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 153.—I. Lord, do not forget my sorrow. II. I do not forget thy law.

*Verses* 154, 156, 159.—The threefold quickening. A capital subject, if the contexts are carefully considered.

*Verse* 154.—Intercession, deliverance, quickening, and all in faithfulness to the word.

*Verse* 154.—A prayer. I. For promised defence. II. For promised deliverance. III. For promised revival.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 154.—*The Advocate.* I. The soul hard-pressed by the accuser—in the conscience (1 John iii. 20); before the world; at the throne of grace (Zech. iii.); at the bar of judgment. II. The accused soul committing its case to the Advocate: 1 John ii. 2; 2 Tim. i. 12. III. How the case will go. He never lost one yet.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 155.—I. An awful distance. II. A distance never decreased by seeking. III. A distance increased by sinning.

*Verse* 155.—I. When salvation is far off. II. When it is near. Or—I. When the word is far off salvation is far off. III. When the word is near salvation is near.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 155.—*How to avoid salvation.* I. Salvation is inseparable from conformity to God's law: Lev. xviii. 5; Luke x. 25—28; Matt. xix. 17. II. Salvation is brought to lawbreakers by the Law-giver condescending to become the Law-keeper and the Law-victim. Salvation is avoided by those who refuse to be conformed to the eternal law or will of God. They perish themselves: their own sin punishes them: necessity punishes them.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 155.—A syllogism on salvation. I. Salvation and obedience go

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together. 1. Have a common centre—God, his *arm* and his *lips*. 2. A mutual relation: we are saved in order to obedience. In obeying we are being saved. Without obedience there is no salvation. 3. An identical aim—our good and God's glory. 4. Obedience and salvation are inseparable for ever. II. The godless are far from obedience. 1. Commands avoided. 2. Submission excluded. III. Therefore they are far from salvation. They *will* not have the one; they *cannot* have the other.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 156.—I. A great need. II. Laid before a great Lord. III. Great favours pleaded. IV. A great mercy sought: "quicken me."

*Verse* 156.—*Just, and the Quickener.* I. Spiritual life is the gift of God's mercy. II. Its continuance depends on the exercise of God's power. III. We may therefore plead for quickening on the ground of God's justice.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 156.—The saint. I. Lost in admiration. 1. Of God's tender mercies. 2. He cries out at their greatness. They are numerous. Greatly tender. Great *and* tender; (exquisite combination!). II. Filled with animation. The child of his admiration. 1. The arrow-like prayer: "Quicken me." To be like, to be true to, such a God. 2. The bow in the hand: "according to thy judgments."—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 156.—I. The tenderness of God's greatness. II. The greatness of God's tenderness. III. The stimulus to life found in his great and tender presence.

*Verse* 157.—I. A word of multitude: "many." II. A tendency of dread, viz., a tendency to decline. III. A note of consolation: "yet do I not decline."

*Verse* 158.—*A grievous sight.* I. Transgressors beyond God's bounds. II. Bounds so kindly set: "thy word." III. Transgressions so wantonly ungrateful, so terribly dangerous, so fatal.

*Verse* 158.—*Sorrow over sinners.* I. A sight we cannot avoid seeing. II. A sorrow we ought not to avoid feeling. (See Lot: 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. Moses: Deut. ix. 18, 19. Samuel: 1 Sam. xv. 11: Jeremiah ix. 1. Paul: Phil. iii. 18. Christ: Luke xix. 41). III. A reason we will not avoid endorsing.

*Verse* 158.—A righteous man cannot but be grieved at the sins of the wicked. He sees in them,—I. The violation of the divine law which he loves. II. Ungrateful rebellion against the God he worships. III. Contempt for the gospel of salvation and the blood of Christ. IV. The dominion of Satan, the enemy of his God. V. The degradation of souls which might have been sacred temples. VI. Prophetic signs of an awful, everlasting retribution.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 159.—I. His own love avowed. II. God's love pleaded. III. Renewed life implored.

*Verse* 159.—I. Attention invited: "Consider how." II. Profession made: "I love thy precepts." III. Petition offered: "Quicken me," etc. IV. Plea suggested: "according to," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 159.—*My love and thy lovingkindness.* The saint's love. I. Avowed. "Thou knowest all things," etc. II. Submitted. In humble insistance on its sincerity. In sense of its insufficiency. In prayer to God not to overlook it. III. Lost sight of in the sudden glory of God's lovingkindness. Where is my love now? IV. Recovered and humbly brought for quickening. Lord, I'll say no more about it: "Quicken me."—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 159.—*Quicken me for love's sake.* I. A prayer for quickened life. II. Awakened by love to the divine rule of life. III. Enforced by the plea of that love. IV. Addressed to the God of love.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 159.—Consider,—I. The holy unsatisfiedness of the believer: "Quicken me," etc. 1. A prayer frequently occurring in the psalm, and always urged with great earnestness. 2. Its importunity proves the possession of spiritual life; in fact, none but the living ones crave quickening. 3. The most

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earnest feel the most acutely their indwelling sin, and appreciate most highly thorough sanctification. 4. Thus, this is, perhaps, the only unsatisfiedness perfectly pure in its character. II. The assuring Divine attribute to which he can appeal: "According to thy lovingkindness." 1. An attribute, not only made known in the word, but made manifest to us in our experience of its gentle dealing. 2. An attribute that covers sin, and is touched with a feeling of our infirmities. 3. An attribute that must be affected with the cry for quickening grace. III. The consideration he ought to be able to lay before God: "Consider how I love thy precepts." 1. Because from the word he learnt of the lovingkindness, and through it received life. 2. Without it the prayer cannot be genuine. 3. It is a good reason for expecting more grace; for "whosoever hath, to him shall be given," etc.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 160.—I. Early: "true from the beginning." II. Late: "endureth for ever." Or, Truth and immutability the believer's Jachin and Boaz.

*Verses* 161, 162.—God's word, the object of godly fear and godly joy. 1. It makes the heart quake by its purity and power. 2. It makes the heart rejoice by its grace and truth.—*W. H. J. P.*

*Verse* 161.—I. Wrong without cause. II. Right with abundant cause.

*Verse* 161 (*second clause*).—Awe of God's word—its propriety, its hallowed influence, the evil of its absence.

*Verse* 161.—*Restrained by awe.* I. The causelessness of persecution. II. The temptations to evil occasioned thereby—to revenge: to apostasy. III. The safeguard against falling: awe of God's word. 1. Sam. xxiv. 6; Dan. iii. 16—18; Acts iv. 19; v. 29.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 162.—I. The treasure hid: "great spoil" hidden in the divine word. II. The treasure found: "as one that findeth," etc. 1. By reading. 2. By meditation. 3. By prayer. III. The treasure enjoyed: "I rejoice," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 162.—David's joy over God's word he compares to the joy of the warrior when he finds great spoil. I. This great joy is sometimes aroused by the fact that there is a word of God. 1. The Scriptures are a revealing of God. 2. The guide of our life. 3. A sure pledge of mercy. 4. The beginning of communion with God. 5. The instrument of usefulness. II. Frequently the joy of the believer in the word arises out of his having had to battle to obtain a grasp of it. 1. We have had to fight over certain doctrines before we could really come at them. 2. The same may be said of the promises. 3. Of the precepts. 4. Of the threatenings. 5. Even about the word which reveals Christ. III. At times the joy of the believer lies in enjoying God's word without any fighting at all: "One that findeth." IV. There is a joy arising out of the very fact that Holy Scripture may be considered to be a spoil. 1. A spoil is the end of uncertainty. 2. It is the weakening of the adversary for any future attacks. 3. It gives a sense of victory. 4. There is, in dividing the spoil, profit, pleasure, and honour. 5. The spoiling of the enemy is a prophecy of rest. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1641: "Great Spoil."

*Verse* 163.—*Opposite poles of the Christian character.* I. Why I hate lying, because it comes from the devil (Pro. viii. 44, Acts v. 3): it leads to the devil (Rev. xxi. 8, xxii. 15): it is base, dangerous, degrading (Prov. xix. 5, 1 Tim. iv. 2, 2 Tim. iii. 13): it is hated by the Lord (Prov. vi. 16, 17, xii. 22). II. Why I love the law. Because it emanates from God; is the reflection of his character; is the ideal of my character. III. How I came thus to hate and love. By the grace of God: ver. 29.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 163.—I. Opposite things. II. Opposite feelings.

*Verse* 164.—Praise rendered. Frequently, statedly, heartily, intelligently.

*Verse* 164.—*Perpetual praise.* I. True praise is ever warranted. II. True praise is ever welcome. III. True praise is never weary.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 164.—1. Some never praise thee; but, "seven times a day," etc.;

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for I delight to do so. "Thy righteous judgments" are a terror to them, a joy to me. 2. Some feebly and coldly praise thee, while, "seven times," etc. My warm devotion must frequently express itself in praise. 3. Some are content with occasionally praising thee, but, "seven times," etc. They think it enough to begin and end the day with praise, while all the day long I am in the spirit of praise. 4. Some soon cease to praise thee, but, "seven times," etc. Not seven times only, but "unto seventy times seven." Even without ceasing, will I praise thee.—*W. H. J. P.*

*Verse* 165.—I. Great love to a great law. II. Great peace under great disquietude. III. Great upholding from all stumblingblocks.

*Verse* 165.—*Perfect peace.* I. The law of God should be regarded with love. II. Love to the law is productive of great peace. Peace with God through the blood of reconciliation: peace with self by good conscience and suppression of evil desires: peace with men by charity. III. The peace which springs from love to the law is a security against stumbling: "nothing shall offend them;" neither the daily cross (Mark x. 21, 22); nor the fiery trial (Mark iv. 7); nor the humbling doctrine (John vi. 60, 66, etc.).—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 165.—I. The characters described: "they which love thy law." II. The blessing they enjoy: "great peace." III. The evils they escape: "nothing shall offend them."—*G. R.*

*Verse* 165.—The peace and security of the godly. I. *Their peace.* It arises from—1. Freedom from an accusing conscience. 2. Conformity to the requirements of the law. 3. Enjoyment of the privileges revealed in the law. 4. Assurance of divine approval and benediction. II. *Their security.* 1. They are prepared for every duty. 2. They are proof against every temptation. 3. They are pledged to final perseverance. 4. They have the promise of divine protection.—*W. H. J. P.*

*Verse* 165.—I. An honourable title: "They which love thy law." II. A good possession: "Great peace have they." III. A blessed immunity: "Nothing shall offend them."—*J. F.*

*Verse* 166.—I. A hope which is not ashamed. II. A life which is not ashamed. III. A God of whom he is not ashamed.

*Verse* 166.—*A good hope through grace.* I. Salvation is God's gift: "thy salvation." II. Is apprehended by hope: "I have hoped." III. Is accompanied by obedience: "and done thy commandments." Heb. vi. 9.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 167.—Past and present.

*Verse* 167.—I. The more we keep God's testimonies the more we shall love them. II. The more we love them the more we shall keep them.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 167.—I. The jewels: "Thy testimonies." 1. Rare; none like them. 2. Rich; surpassing valuation. 3. Beautifying those who wear them. 4. Glittering with an internal and essential splendour, in the darkness of this world. 5. Realising in truth the old superstitions regarding precious stones having medicinal and magic virtues. II. The cabinet: "My soul." 1. Exactly made to receive the jewels. 2. A wonderful piece of divine workmanship; but all ruined and marred unless applied to the use designed. 3. The only receptacle out of which the genuine beauty of God's testimonies can so shine as to excite the admiration of beholders. III. The lock that keeps all safe: "I love them exceedingly." 1. Love is the strongest holdfast in the universe. 2. It is needed, for ten thousand thieves prowl around to steal from us the treasure. 3. A love "exceedingly" is a heavenly patent; no ingenuity can pick it; it is fire-proof and burglar-proof against hell itself.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 168.—I. The claim of God's word upon our utmost obedience. "I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies." He does not mean that he had kept them perfectly; for that were to contradict other expressions in the psalm. He means that he kept them sincerely and strove to keep them perfectly, as one who realized their claim upon him. 1. The whole word is divine: an equal authority pervades every precept; no distinction should

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be made of more or less obligation. 2. The whole word is pure and right; expediency, or making the measure and manner of obedience suitable to our own purpose, is a false principle; to be carefully distinguished from righteous expediency, which is the foregoing of a personal right in consideration of another's benefit. 3. The moral code of the word is a unity; obedience is like a connected chain, a wilful flaw in one link renders all useless. II. The consciousness which greatly helps obedience: "For all my ways are before thee." 1. "Are before thee," as plainly seen by thee. 2. "Are before thee," constantly observed. 3. "Are before thee;" deliberately placed before thee by me, that they may be corrected and directed.—*J. F.*

*Verse* 168.—"*All my ways are before thee.*" I. The saint's delight. II. The sinner's distress.—*W. W.*

*Verse* 168 (*second clause*).—1. *Necessarily so:* for thou art the omniscient God: Psalm cxxxix. 3. 2. *Voluntarily so:* for I choose to walk in thy sight. See Psalm cxvi. 9. 3. *Consciously and blessedly so:* for the light of thy countenance inspires and gladdens me. See Psalm lxxxix. 15.—*W. H. J. P.*

*Verse* 168 (*second clause*).—Living in the sight of God. Actually the case with all; designedly the case of the godly; happily the case of the favoured; pre-eminently the case of those who abide in fellowship.

*Verse* 168.—I. The practical and doctrinal teachings of God before us. II. All our ways before him. III. The sort of conduct which these two causes will produce.

*Verses* 169, 170.—I. The singular dignity of prayer. We are on earth, but our prayers pass the seraphim and "come near before God." II. The powerful right of prayer—to urge with God his own word: "according to thy word." III. The triumphant possibilities of prayer. Blessing us in mind and estate. For time and eternity. "Give me understanding." "Deliver me." IV. The amazing license accorded to prayer. To double and reiterate its requests (as here).—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 169.—I. Admission to the royal court. II. Instruction from the royal throne. III. Reliance on the royal word.

*Verses* 170—174.—The pleader: ver. 170. The singer: ver. 171. The preacher: ver. 172. The worker: ver. 173. The waiter: ver. 174.

*Verse* 170.—I. Access sought. II. Answer entreated. III. Argument employed.

*Verse* 171.—Taught; taught to praise; praising; praising for being taught.

*Verse* 171.—Learning to sing by learning to obey.

*Verse* 171.—*The Happy Scholar.* I. He rejoices in the lesson he has learnt. II. In the Teacher who has taught him. III. Looks forward to the end of his lesson as the time for the full singing of his song.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 171.—Lessons in Praise.—I. It is saints' work. II. It is sacred work, not to be hurriedly rushed into. III. It needs Spirit-instructed singers.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 172.—I. The orator: "My tongue shall speak." II. His chosen theme: "of thy word." III. His inward impulse: "for all thy commandments are righteousness."

*Verse* 172.—*Savoury Speech.* I. A resolution all believers should make. II. The qualification all believers should seek (Psalm xlv. 1; Mat. xii. 34, 35). III. The edification believers would thus secure.—*C. A. D.*

*Verse* 173.—I. "To will is present with me." II. "How to perform that which I would, I find not." III. "Help, Lord."

*Verse* 173.—I. Help needed to keep the divine precepts. II. Help sought: "Let thy hand," etc. We should choose nothing and do nothing in which we cannot ask help from God.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 173.—I. God's Hand. 1. Its warm hold (John x. 29). 2. Its wealth of contents (Ps. civ. 28). 3. Its heavy blow (Ps. xxxix. 10). 4. Its

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weight (1 Sam. v. 11). 5. Its saving reach (Isa. lix. 1). 6. Its sweet shadow (Isa. xlix. 2), etc. II. The saint plucks him by the sleeve: "Let thy hand help me." 1. His humble representation. 2. His down-drawing of the hand of God.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 173.—"*Let thy hand help me.*" I. Thy reconciling hand: "stretched out." II. Thy comforting hand; like that which touched Daniel and John. III. Thy supplying hand. "Thou openest thy hand," etc. IV. Thy protecting hand: "all his saints are in thy hand": Deut. xxxiii. 3. "Great Shepherd of the sheep." V. Thy supporting hand: "I will uphold thee." VI. Thy governing hand: "all my times are in thy hand." VII. Thy chastening hand: "Thy hand was heavy upon me." VIII. Thy prospering hand: "the hand of the Lord was with," etc.—*W. J.*

*Verse* 174.—I. Jacob's longings. II. Moses' choice.

*Verse* 174.—God's servant drinking at salvation's well, but unsated. I. Longing yielding to delight. 1. At God's salvation. 2. At the rich Scripture inventory. II. Delight bringing forth further longing. 1. For deeper discoveries in the word. 2. Richer experiences in the life. 3. Heaven's consummation.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 174.—I. Sighings for heaven. Holiness, happiness, God. II. Sips by the way. The word of God, the will of God, service of God, the God in all.—*W. B. H.*

*Verse* 174.—"*I have longed for thy salvation.*" Thy holy salvation. Thy full salvation. Thy free salvation. Thy present salvation. Thy permanent salvation.—*W. J.*

*Verse* 174.—"*I have longed,*" etc. This longing arises, 1. From a painful consciousness of the need of salvation. 2. From a perception of the glories of God's salvation. 3. From the promises which give assurance of the possibility of obtaining this salvation. 4. From the gracious promptings of the Holy Ghost.—*W. H. J. P.*

*Verse* 175.—I. The highest life. II. The highest occupation. III. Both dependent on the highest aid.

*Verse* 175.—*Praise.* I. The noblest employment of life—to praise God. II. The noblest presentation of praise—the holy life. III. The noblest application of divine judgments—to inspire praise.

*Verse* 176.—I. My confession: "I have gone astray." II. My profession: "thy servant." III. My petition: "seek thy servant." IV. My plea: "for I do not forget," etc.

*Verse* 176.—I. The confession: "I have gone astray." II. The petition: "Seek thy servant." III. The plea: "For I do not," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 176.—The last verse *as such. The closing minor cadence.* I. The highest flights of human devotion must end in confession of sin: "I have gone astray." II. The sincerest professions of human fidelity must give place to the acknowledgment of helplessness: "seek thy servant." III. The loftiest human declarations of love to God's law must come down to the mournful acknowledgment that we have only not forgotten it.—*C. A. D.*

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## WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH PSALM.

*Two and Twentie Sermons of Maister Iohn Caluin.* In which Sermons is most religiously handled, the hundredth and nineteenth Psalme of Dauid, by eight verses apart according to the Hebrew Alphabet. Translated out of French into Englishe by T[homas] S[tocker]. Imprinted at London for Iohn Harison and Thomas Man. 1580. [4to.]

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"*An Exposition on the* 119 *Psalme.*" In "The Workes of . . . M. RICHARD GREENHAM" [pp. 379—608], folio, 1612.

*A Holy Alphabet for Sion's Scholars; Full of Spiritual Instructions, and Heavenly Consolations, to direct and encourage them in their Progresse towards the New Jerusalem: Deliuered, by way of Commentary vpon the whole* 119 *Psalme.* By WILLIAM COWPER, Minister of God's Word, and B. of Galloway. . . . [4to.] London. . . . 1613. Also in Bishop Cowper's Works [pp. 359—474], folio, 1629.

"*Sommary and Holy Observations collected out of the foure first Octonaries or parts of the hundred and nineteenth Psalme.*"

The above will be found in "A Commentarie upon the first and second chapters of Saint Paul to the Colossians . . . together with divers places of Scripture briefly explained. By Mr. Paul Bayne, B.D. London: 1635." [4to.]

*One Hundred and Ninety Sermons on the Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm.* By the Rev. THOMAS MANTON, D.D. Folio. London, 1725. Also 3 vols., 8vo., 1842; 3 vols. (with Life), 1845; and in vols. VII., VIII., and IX. of Nichol's (now Nisbet's) edition of Manton's Works.

*An Hundred, Seventy and Six,* SACRED OBSERVATIONS. *Upon the Several* VERSES *of* (*The Sweetest of* PSALMES) *the Hundred and Nineteenth* PSALM, *Stated, Opened, and Applied* (*as a brief Exposition thereon*) *to the People of* WEST COWES, *in the Isle of* WIGHT, *being the Exercise of my Publick Ministry, in their New Chappel, lately Consecrated by the Right Reverend Father in God, George Lord Bishop of* WINTON.

The preceding forms the latter part of a very small 8vo. entitled "MOSES REVIVED," on "The Unlawfulness of Eating Blood"; by John Moore, 1669. The exposition is simply worthless, and we notice it merely to save collectors of Psalm literature trouble and expense.

*Exposition of Psalm cxix. as illustrative of the Character and Exercises of Christian Experience.* By the Rev. CHARLES BRIDGES, M.A. [12mo.] 1827, and many subsequent editions.

*Lord's Day Literature: or, Illustrations of the Book of Psalms, from the Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm consecutively.* By R. B. SANDERSON, Esq., B.A. [12mo.] 1842.

*The Utterances of the CXIX. Psalm; expounded in a Series of Lectures.* By the Rev. JOHN STEPHEN, A.M. Free John Knox's, Aberdeen. . . . . 1861. [12mo.]

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THE

# SONGS OF DEGREES,

OR,

# THE GRADUAL PSALMS.

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PSALM CXX. TO CXXXIV.

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## THE SONGS OF DEGREES AS A WHOLE.

This little psalter within the psalter consists of fifteen brief songs. Why they are grouped together and what is meant by their generic name it would be hard to tell. The conjectures are very many, but they are mere suppositions. Out of them all the conjecture of Dr. Jebb best commends itself to my own mind, though it would be quite consistent with this suggestion to believe that the series of songs arranged by David became the Pilgrim Psalms of after ages, and were chanted by the Lord's people as they went up to the temple. They are "Songs of the Goings Up;" so some read the word. Those who delight to spiritualize everything find here Ascents of the Soul, or language fitted to describe the rising of the heart from the deepest grief to the highest delight. I have thought it well to indicate the methods by which learned men have tried to explain the term "Songs of Degrees," but the reader must select his own interpretation.—*C. H. S.*

In the thirteenth chapter of the First Book of Chronicles, it is related, that David brought up the Ark from Kirjath-jearim to the house of Obed-edom. The word (עלכה) used in the seventh verse, for "bringing up" the Ark, is of the same etymology with, and cognate to that which is translated "*degrees.*" And upon this occasion the great event was celebrated by the accompaniment of sacred music. "And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." Again, in the fifteenth chapter of the same book, in the fourteenth verse, the same term is employed for bringing up the Ark to Jerusalem; and the choral services of the Levites are mentioned in immediate connection. And in the fifth chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles (fifth verse), we are told that Solomon assembled the people at the dedication of the Temple, to bring up the Ark from Sion to the Temple of the Lord.—*John Jebb.*

I abide in the simple and plain sense as much as I may, and judge that these psalms are called The Psalms of Degrees because the Levites or priests were wont to sing them upon the stairs or some high place; even as with us he that beginneth the psalms or preacheth, standeth in a place above the rest, that he may be the better seen and heard. For it seemeth not that these psalms were sung of the multitude which were in the Temple, or of the rest of the choir, but of certain which were appointed to sing them, or at least to begin them on the stairs to the rest, and so have their name; like as some other of the psalms have their name and title from the singer. But how should a man know all their rites and ceremonies, especially after so long a time, whereby they are now clean worn out of the memory of all men? Seeing therefore among such a multitude of psalms, when the law was yet in his full force and power, some were wont to be sung with one manner of ceremony, and some with another, according to the time and place, as the use and custom then was, let this suffice us to think that this title pertaineth to no point of doctrine, but only to the ceremony of the singers, what manner of ceremony soever it was.—*Martin Luther, in "A Commentarie upon the Psalmes of Degrees,"* 1577.

There were *fifteen steps* by which the priests ascended into the Temple, on each of which they sang one of these *fifteen* psalms.—*David Kimchi.*

Whatever view of the *Songs of Degrees* you may take besides, you cannot leave out some association of them with the steps, without ignoring the unanimous belief about them handed down from time immemorial amongst the people who gave them to us; without, in fact, implying that at some epoch or other this strange association of the steps with the psalms was gratuitously invented, and, being invented, secured general acceptance in the sacred literature of the Hebrew nation. It is quite impossible to believe such a thing, when we are dealing with a people so jealous of precedent and

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authority in religion as the Hebrews have always been. I see, in fact, no sufficient reason why we should not follow the leading of the Mischna and feel that Songs of Degrees, Songs of the Steps, is as much as to say Songs in the sacred Orchestra.—*H. T. Armfield, in "The Gradual Psalms,"* 1874.

The great Carmelite expositor, Michael Ayguan, alleges that the fifteen psalms were divided by the Jews into three portions of five, with prayers intercalated, much as the Gregorian division of matins into three nocturns; and that each of the three grades of advance in the spiritual life is betokened by each quinary; the beginners, the progressors, and the perfect; or, in other terms, those who are severally in the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive way. And thus it will be noticed that in Psalms cxx.—cxxiv. there is constant reference to trouble and danger; in cxxv.—cxxix. to confidence in God; in cxxx.—cxxxiv. to direct communion with him in his house. And Genebrardus, a later commentator, defines the fifteen degrees of going up out of the valley of weeping to the presence of God to be (1) affliction, (2) looking to God, (3) joy in communion, (4) invocation, (5) thanksgiving, (6) confidence, (7) patient waiting for deliverance, (8) God's grace and favour, (9) fear of the Lord, (10) martyrdom, (11) hatred of sins, (12) humility, (13) desire for the coming of Christ, (14) concord and charity, (15) constant blessing of God.—*Neale and Littledale.*

No trace in history, or authentic tradition, can be found of these *steps*, which owe their construction solely to the accommodating fancy of the Rabbins, who, as usual, imagined facts, in order to support their preconceived theories.—*John Jebb.*

It is an additional objection to this Rabbinical conceit, that David, whose name several of these psalms bear—and others of which have evident reference to his time and circumstances—lived in the time of the tabernacle which had no steps.—*James Anderson's Note to Calvin in loc.*

In the version of Theodotian, executed in the early part of the second century, with the express view of correcting the errors of the Septuagint, as well as in the translations by Aquila and by Symmachus, these psalms are rightly described as songs for the journeys up, and are thus at once referred to the stated pilgrimages to the Temple. The expressions, "Thou shalt *go up* to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year" (Exod. xxxiv. 24), "If this people *go up* to do sacrifice" (1 Kings xii. 27)—a form of expression constantly employed as often as these sacred journeys are mentioned—is precisely that which the psalms themselves exhibit: "I was glad when it was said unto me, Go up unto the house of the Lord"; and while we may well adopt this view, for the additional reason that it is in harmony with the whole spirit and sentiment which they breathe throughout, we shall find these psalms to form at the same time one of the most admirable and instructive manuals of devotion with which the love of our heavenly Father, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, has been pleased to bless us.—*Robert Nisbet, in "The Songs of the Temple Pilgrims,"* 1863.

If the traditionary interpretation of the title, Song of Degrees, be accepted, that they were sung by devout pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to keep the great feasts of the Lord, we may suppose that companies toiling up this long ascent would relieve the tedium of the way by chanting some of them.

From the customs of Orientals still prevalent, I think it highly probable that such an explanation of the title may be substantially correct. Nothing is more common than to hear individuals and parties of natives, travelling together through the open country and along mountain-paths, especially during the night, break out into singing some of their favourite songs. Once, descending from the top of Sunnín, above Beirût, with a large company of natives, they spontaneously began to sing in concert. The moon was shining brightly in the clear sky, and they kept up their chanting for a long time. I shall not soon forget the impression made by that moonlight



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concert, as we wound our way down the eastern side of Lebanon to the Bukâ'a, on the way to Ba'albek. Through the still midnight air of that lofty region the rough edge of their stentorian voices, softened into melody, rang out full and strong, waking the sleeping echoes far and wide down the rocky defiles of the mountain. Something like this may have often rendered vocal this dreary ascent to Jerusalem. It is common in this country to travel in the night during the summer, and we know that the Hebrew pilgrims journeyed in large companies. On his ascent along this road from Jericho to the Holy City, Jesus was attended not only by the twelve apostles, but by others, both men and women; and it would be strange indeed if sometimes they did not seek relief from this oppressive solitude by singing the beautiful songs of Zion.—*William M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book,"* 1881.

When we consider the place in the psalter which these "*Songs of Degrees*, or *of the goings up*" occupy, we see good reason to accept the statement (of the Syriac version, and of S. Chrysostom, Theodoret, Euthymius, and other Fathers, and also of Symmachus, Aquila, and of Hammond, Ewald, and many moderns), that these psalms describe the feelings of those Israelites who *went up* with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and afterwards with Ezra, and still later with Nehemiah, from the land of their captivity and dispersion at Babylon, Susa, and other regions of the East, to the home of their fathers, Jerusalem. Hence, in some of the foregoing psalms, we have seen a reference to the dedication of the Second Temple (Ps. cxviii.), and of the walls of Jerusalem (Ps. cii.), and to the building up of the nation itself on the old foundation of the law of God, given to their fathers at Sinai (Ps. cxix.)—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Gesenius has the merit of having first discerned the true meaning of the questioned inscription, inasmuch as first in 1812, and frequently since that time, he has taught that the fifteen songs have their name from the step-like progressive rhythm of their thoughts, and that consequently the name, like the triolet (roundelay) in Western poetry, does not refer to the liturgical usage, but to the technical structure. The correctness of this view has been duly appraised more particularly by De Wette, who adduces this rhythm of steps or degrees, too, among the more artificial rhythms. The songs are called Songs of Degrees or Gradual Psalms as being songs that move onward towards a climax, and that by means of πλοκή (ἐπιπλοκή), *i.e.*, a taking up again of the immediately preceding word by way of giving intensity to the expression; and they are placed together on account of this common characteristic, just like the *Michtammim*, which bear that name from a similar characteristic.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

"Go up, go up, my soul!" must be the motto of one who would enter into the meaning of these psalms. They are a Jacob's ladder whose foot is fixed on the earth, but the top reaches up to the "heavenly Jerusalem."

The rhythmical structure of these psalms (in which one line is built up upon another stair-wise) is a suitable outward accompaniment of the interior character of the psalms. Short, pointed lines fall in well with the flow of mystico-allegorical thought:—as in "Nearer, my God, to thee," or, "Jerusalem the golden."—*William Kay.*

We may notice the following characteristics of nearly all these psalms: sweetness and tenderness; a sad pathetic tone; brevity; an absence generally of the ordinary parallelism; and something of a quick, trochaic rhythm. —"*The Speaker's Commentary.*"

Though it may be they are so called because of their excellency; a song of degrees being an *excellent* song, as an excellent man is called a man of high degree (1 Chron. xvii. 17); these being excellent ones for the matter of them, their manner of composure, and the brevity of them.—*John Gill.*

This being a matter of small moment, I am not disposed to make it the subject of elaborate investigation; but the probable conjecture is, that this

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title was given to these psalms because they were sung on a higher key than others. The Hebrew word for *degrees* being derived from the word, עלה *tsalah, to ascend*, or *go up*, I agree with those who are of opinion that it denotes the different musical notes rising in succession.—*John Calvin.*

Hezekiah liveth, these fifteen years, in safety and prosperity, having humbled himself before the Lord for his pride to the ambassadors of Babel. The degrees of the sun's reversing, and the fifteen years of Hezekiah's life prolonging, may call to our minds the fifteen Psalms of Degrees; viz. from Psalm cxx. and forward. There were Hezekiah's songs that were sung to the stringed instruments in the house of the Lord (Isai. xxxviii. 20): whether these were picked out by him for that purpose may be left to conjecture.—*John Lightfoot*, 1602—1675.

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## WORKS UPON PSALMS CXX.—CXXXIV., COMMONLY CALLED THE PSALMS OF DEGREES.

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THE ASCENTS OF THE SOUL: OR, DAVID'S Mount Towards GOD'S House. Being Paraphrases on the Fifteen Psalms of Degrees. *Written in* Italian, *By the Illustrious* GEO. FRANCESCO LOREDANO, *a Noble* Venetian, 1656. Rendered in *English*, Anno Dom. 1665. [By Henry Hare, Lord Coleraine.] London . . . 1681. [Small folio.]

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*The Pilgrim Psalms: an Exposition of the Songs of Degrees. Psalms CXX. to CXXXIV.* By the Rev. N. M'MICHAEL, D.D., Dunfermline. . . . Edinburgh and London: 1860. [Cr. 8vo.]

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*The Gradual Psalms: a Treatise on the Fifteen Songs of Degrees, with Commentary, based on Ancient Hebrew, Chaldee, and Christian Authorities.* By Rev. H. T. ARMFIELD, M.A., F.S.A. London; 1874. [Cr. 8vo.]

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In "*The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms*" . . . By ALFRED EDERSHEIM, D.D., Ph.D., London, 1877, there are Expositions of Psalms CXXI., CXXIV., CXXVII., and CXXXIII.

*The Caravan and the Temple, and Songs of the Pilgrims. Psalms CXX.—CXXXIV.* By EDWARD JEWITT ROBINSON. London . . . 1878.

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# PSALM CXX.

*Suddenly we have left the continent of the vast Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm for the islands and islets of the Songs of Degrees. It may be well to engage in protracted devotion upon a special occasion, but this must cast no slur upon the sacred brevities which sanctify the godly life day by day. He who inspired the longest psalm was equally the author of the short compositions which follow it.*

TITLE.—A SONG OF DEGREES.—*We have already devoted a sufficient space to the consideration of this title in its application to this psalm and the fourteen compositions which succeed it. These appear to us to be Pilgrim Psalms, but we are not sure that they were always sung in company; for many of them are in the first person singular. No doubt there were solitary pilgrims as well as troops who went to the house of God in company, and for these lonely ones hymns were prepared.*

SUBJECT.—*A certain author supposes that this hymn was sung by an Israelite upon leaving his house to go up to Jerusalem. He thinks that the good man had suffered from the slander of his neighbours, and was glad to get away from their gossip, and spend his time in the happier engagements of the holy feasts. It may be so, but we hope that pious people were not so foolish as to sing about their bad neighbours when they were leaving them for a few days. If they wished to leave their houses in safety, and to come home to kind surroundings, it would have been the height of folly to provoke those whom they were leaving behind by singing aloud a psalm of complaint against them. We do not know why this ode is placed first among the Psalms of Degrees, and we had rather hazard no conjecture of our own. We prefer the old summary of the translators—*"David prayeth against Doeg"—*to any far-fetched supposition: and if this be the scope of the psalm, we see at once why it suggested itself to David at the station where the ark abode, and from which he had come to remove it. He came to fetch away the ark, and at the place where he found it he thought of Doeg, and poured out his plaint concerning him. The author had been grievously calumniated, and had been tortured into bitterness by the false charges of his persecutors, and here is his appeal to the great Arbiter of right and wrong, before whose judgment-seat no man shall suffer from slanderous tongues.*

## EXPOSITION.

IN my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.

2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, *and* from a deceitful tongue.

3 What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?

4 Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.

5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, *that* I dwell in the tents of Kedar!

6 My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.

7 I *am for* peace: but when I speak, they *are* for war.

1. "*In my distress.*" Slander occasions distress of the most grievous kind. Those who have felt the edge of a cruel tongue know assuredly that it is sharper than the sword. Calumny rouses our indignation by a sense of injustice, and yet we find ourselves helpless to fight with the evil, or to act in our own defence. We could ward off the strokes of a cutlass, but we have no shield against a liar's tongue. We do not know who was the father of the falsehood, nor where it was born, nor where it has gone, nor how to follow it, nor how to stay its withering influence. We are perplexed, and know not which way to turn. Like the plague of flies in Egypt, it baffles opposition, and few can stand before it. Detraction touches us in the tenderest point, cuts to the quick, and leaves a venom behind which it is difficult to extract. In all ways it is a sore distress to come under the power

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of "slander, the foulest whelp of sin." Even in such distress we need not hesitate to cry unto the Lord. Silence to man and prayer to God are the best cures for the evil of slander.

"*I cried unto the* LORD" (or Jehovah). The wisest course that he could follow. It is of little use to appeal to our fellows on the matter of slander, for the more we stir in it the more it spreads; it is of no avail to appeal to the honour of the slanderers, for they have none, and the most piteous demands for justice will only increase their malignity and encourage them to fresh insult. As well plead with panthers and wolves as with black-hearted traducers. However, when cries to man would be our weakness, cries to God will be our strength. To whom should children cry but to their father? Does not some good come even out of that vile thing, falsehood, when it drives us to our knees and to our God? "*And he heard me.*" Yes, Jehovah hears. He is the living God, and hence prayer to him is reasonable and profitable. The Psalmist remembered and recorded this instance of prayer-hearing, for it had evidently much affected him; and now he rehearses it for the glory of God and the good of his brethren. "The righteous cry and the Lord heareth them." The ear of our God is not deaf, nor even heavy. He listens attentively, he catches the first accent of supplication; he makes each of his children confess,—"he heard *me.*" When we are slandered it is a joy that the Lord knows us, and cannot be made to doubt our uprightness: he will not hear the lie against us, but he will hear our prayer against the lie.

If these psalms were sung at the ascent of the ark to Mount Zion, and then afterwards by the pilgrims to Jerusalem at the annual festivals and at the return from Babylon, we shall find in the life of David a reason for this being made the first of them. Did not this servant of God meet with Doeg the Edomite when he enquired of the oracle by Abiathar, and did not that wretched creature belie him and betray him to Saul? This made a very painful and permanent impression upon David's memory, and therefore in commencing the ark-journey he poured out his lament before the Lord, concerning the great and monstrous wrong of "that dog of a Doeg," as Trapp wittily calls him. The poet, like the preacher, may find it to his advantage to "begin low," for then he has the more room to rise: the next psalm is a full octave above the present mournful hymn. Whenever we are abused it may console us to see that we are not alone in our misery: we are traversing a road upon which David left his footprints.

2. "*Deliver my soul, O* LORD, *from lying lips.*" It will need divine power to save a man from these deadly instruments. Lips are soft; but when they are *lying* lips they suck away the life of character and are as murderous as razors. Lips should never be red with the blood of honest men's reputes, nor salved with malicious falsehoods. David says, "Deliver my soul": the soul, the life of the man, is endangered by lying lips; cobras are not more venomous, nor devils themselves more pitiless. Some seem to lie for lying sake, it is their sport and spirit: their lips deserve to be kissed with a hot iron; but it is not for the friends of Jesus to render to men according to their deserts. Oh for a dumb generation rather than a lying one! The faculty of speech becomes a curse when it is degraded into a mean weapon for smiting men behind their backs. We need to be delivered from slander by the Lord's restraint upon wicked tongues, or else to be delivered out of it by having our good name cleared from the liar's calumny. "*And from a deceitful tongue.*" This is rather worse than downright falsehood. Those who fawn and flatter, and all the while have enmity in their hearts, are horrible beings; they are the seed of the devil, and he worketh in them after his own deceptive nature. Better to meet wild beasts and serpents than deceivers: these are a kind of monster whose birth is from beneath, and whose end lies far below. It should be a warning to liars and deceivers when they see that all good men pray against them, and that even bad

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men are afraid of them. Here is to the believer good cause for prayer. "Deliver us from evil," may be used with emphasis concerning this business. From gossips, talebearers, writers of anonymous letters, forgers of newspaper paragraphs, and all sorts of liemongers, good Lord deliver us!

3. "*What shall be given unto thee?*" What is the expected guerdon of slander? It ought to be something great to make it worth while to work in so foul an atmosphere and to ruin one's soul. Could a thousand worlds be bribe enough for such villainous deeds? The liar shall have no welcome recompense: he shall meet with his deserts; but what shall they be? What punishment can equal his crime? The Psalmist seems lost to suggest a fitting punishment. It is the worst of offences—this detraction, calumny, and slander. Judgment sharp and crushing would be measured out to it if men were visited for their transgressions. But what punishment could be heavy enough? What form shall the chastisement take? O liar, "what shall be given unto thee?"

"*Or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?*" How shalt thou be visited? The law of retaliation can hardly meet the case, since none can slander the slanderer, he is too black to be blackened; neither would any of us blacken him if we could. Wretched being! He fights with weapons which true men cannot touch. Like the cuttlefish, he surrounds himself with an inky blackness into which honest men cannot penetrate. Like the foul skunk, he emits an odour of falsehood which cannot be endured by the true; and therefore he often escapes, unchastised by those whom he has most injured. His crime, in a certain sense, becomes his shield; men do not care to encounter so base a foe. But what will God do with lying tongues? He has uttered his most terrible threats against them, and he will terribly execute them in due time.

4. "*Sharp arrows of the mighty.*" Swift, sure, and sharp shall be the judgment. Their words were as arrows, and so shall their punishment be. God will see to it that their punishment shall be comparable to an arrow keen in itself, and driven home with all the force with which a mighty man shoots it from his bow of steel,—"sharp arrows of the mighty." Nor shall one form of judgment suffice to avenge this complicated sin. The slanderer shall feel woes comparable to *coals of juniper*, which are quick in flaming, fierce in blazing, and long in burning. He shall feel sharp arrows and sharper fires. Awful doom! All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Juniper-coals long retain their heat, but hell burneth ever, and the deceitful tongue may not deceive itself with the hope of escape from the fire which it has kindled. What a crime is this to which the All-merciful allots a doom so dreadful! Let us hate it with perfect hatred. It is better to be the victim of slander than to be the author of it. The shafts of calumny will miss the mark, but not so the arrows of God: the coals of malice will cool, but not the fire of justice. Shun slander as you would avoid hell.

5. "*Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!*" Gracious men are vexed with the conversation of the wicked. Our poet felt himself to be as ill-at-ease among lying neighbours as if he had lived among savages and cannibals. The traitors around him were as bad as the unspeakable Turk. He cries "Woe is me!" Their sin appalled him, their enmity galled him. He had some hope from the fact that he was only a sojourner in Mesech; but as years rolled on the time dragged heavily, and he feared that he might call himself a dweller in Kedar. The wandering tribes to whom he refers were constantly at war with one another; it was their habit to travel armed to the teeth; they were a kind of plundering gipsies, with their hand against every man and every man's hand against them; and to these he compared the false-hearted ones who had assailed his character. Those who defame the righteous are worse than cannibals; for

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savages only eat men after they are dead, but these wretches eat them up alive.

"Woe's me that I in Mesech am
A sojourner so long;
That I in tabernacles dwell
To Kedar that belong.

My soul with him that hateth peace
Hath long a dweller been;
I am for peace; but when I speak,
For battle they are keen.

My soul distracted mourns and pines
To reach that peaceful shore,
Where all the weary are at rest,
And troublers vex no more."

6. "*My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.*" Long, long enough, too long had he been an exile among such barbarians. A peace-maker is a blessing, but a peace-hater is a curse. To lodge with such for a night is dangerous, but to dwell with them is horrible. The verse may apply to any one of the Psalmist's detractors: he had seen enough of him and pined to quit such company. Perhaps the sweet singer did not at first detect the nature of the man, for he was a deceiver; and when he did discover him he found himself unable to shake him off, and so was compelled to abide with him. Thoughts of Doeg, Saul, Ahithophel, and the sons of Zeruiah come to our mind,—these last, not as enemies, but as hot-blooded soldiers who were often too strong for David. What a change for the man of God from the quietude of the sheepfold to the turmoil of court and the tumult of combat! How he must have longed to lay aside his sceptre, and to resume his crook. He felt the time of his dwelling with quarrelsome spirits to be long, too long; and he only endured it because, as the Prayer-book version has it, he was *constrained* so to abide.

7. "*I am for peace.*" Properly, "I am peace"; desirous of peace, peaceful, forbearing,—in fact, peace itself. "*But when I speak, they are for war.*" My kindest words appear to provoke them, and they are at daggers drawn at once. Nothing pleases them; if I am silent they count me morose, and if I open my mouth they cavil and controvert. Let those who dwell with such pugilistic company console themselves with the remembrance that both David and David's Lord endured the same trial. It is the lot of the saints to find foes even in their own households. Others besides David dwelt in the place of dragons. Others besides Daniel have been cast into a den of lions. Meanwhile, let those who are in quiet resting-places and peaceful habitations be greatly grateful for such ease. *Deus nobis hæc otia fecit:* God has given us this tranquillity. Be it ours never to inflict upon others that from which we have been screened ourselves.

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## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

*Title.*—"*A Song of Degrees.*" A most excellent song, Tremellius rendereth it; and so indeed this and the fourteen following are, both for the matter, and for the form or manner of expression, which is wondrous short and sweet, as the very epigrams of the Holy Ghost himself, wherein each verse may well stand for an oracle. And in this sense, *adam hammahalah*, or, a man of degrees, is put for an eminent or excellent man: 1 Chron. xvii. 17. Others understand it otherwise; wherein they have good leave to abound in their own sense; an error here is not dangerous.—*John Trapp.*

*Whole Psalm.*—In the interpretation of these psalms, which sees in them the "degrees" of Christian virtues, this psalm aptly describes the first of such steps—the renunciation of the evil and vanity of the world. It thus

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divides itself into two parts. 1. The Psalmist, in the person of one beginning the grades of virtue, finds many opponents in the shape of slanderers and ill advisers. 2. He laments the admixture of evil—"Woe is me."—*H. T. Armfield.*

*Whole Psalm.*—It is a painful but useful lesson which is taught by this first of the Pilgrim Psalms, that all who manifest a resolution to obey the commands and seek the favour of God, may expect to encounter opposition and reproach in such a course . . . . This these worshippers of old found when preparing to seek the Lord in his Temple. They were watched in their preparation by malignant eyes; they were followed to the house of prayer by the contempt and insinuations of bitter tongues. But their refuge is in him they worship; and, firmly convinced that he never can forsake his servants, they look up through the cloud of obloquy to his throne, and implore the succour which they know that his children shall ever find there. "*O* LORD, *in this my trouble deliver my soul.*"—*Robert Nisbet.*

*Whole Psalm.*—The pilgrims were leaving home; and lying lips commonly attack the absent. They were about to join the pilgrim caravan; and in the excitements of social intercourse their own lips might easily deviate from truth. The psalm, moreover, breathes an intense longing for peace; and in this world of strife and confusion, when is that longing inappropriate? Is it any marvel that a Hebrew, with a deep spiritual longing for peace, should cry as he started for the Temple, "Let me get out of all *that*, at least for a time. Let me be quit of this fever and strain, free from the vain turbulence and conflicting noises of the world. Let me rest and recreate myself a while in the sacred asylum and sanctuary of the God of peace. God of peace, grant me thy peace as I worship in thy presence; and let me find a bettered world when I come back to it, or at least bring a bettered and more patient heart to its duties and strifes."—*Samuel Cox.*

*Verse* 1.—"*In my distress I cried unto the* LORD," etc. See the wondrous advantage of trouble,—that it makes us call upon God; and again see the wondrous readiness of mercy, that when we call he heareth us! Very blessed are they that mourn while they are travelling the long upward journey from the Galilee of the Gentiles of this lower world to the heavenly Jerusalem, the high and holy city of the saints of God.—*J. W. Burgon, in "A Plain Commentary."*

*Verse* 1.—"*In my distress.*" God's help is seasonable; it comes when we need it. Christ is a seasonable good. . . . . For the soul to be dark, and for Christ to enlighten it; for the soul to be dead, and Christ to enliven it; for the soul to be doubting, and for Christ to resolve it; and for the soul to be distressed, and for Christ to relieve it; is not this in season? For a soul to be hard, and for Christ to soften it; for a soul to be haughty, and for Christ to humble it; for a soul to be tempted, and for Christ to succour it; and for a soul to be wounded, and for Christ to heal it? Is not this in season?—*R. Mayhew*, 1679.

*Verse* 1.—"*Cried.*" "*Heard.*" The verbs are in the past tense, but do not refer merely to a past occasion. Past experience and present are here combined. From the past he draws encouragement for the present.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

*Verse* 1.—"*And he heard me.*" The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much: James v. 16; Zech. xiii. 9. He that prayeth ardently, speedeth assuredly (Ps. xci. 15); and the unmiscarrying return of prayer should be carefully observed and thankfully improved: Ps. lxvi. 20.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Deliver my soul, O* LORD, *from lying lips,*" etc. An unbridled tongue is *vehiculum Diaboli*, the chariot of the Devil, wherein he rides in triumph. Mr. Greenham doth describe the tongue prettily by contraries,

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or diversities: "It is a little piece of flesh, small in quantity, but mighty in quality; it is soft, but slippery; it goeth lightly, but falleth heavily; it striketh soft, but woundeth sore; it goeth out quickly, but burneth vehemently; it pierceth deep, and therefore not healed speedily; it hath liberty granted easily to go forth, but it will find no means easily to return home; and being once inflamed with Satan's bellows, it is like the fire of hell." The course of an unruly tongue is to proceed from evil to worse, to begin with foolishness, and go on with bitterness, and to end in mischief and madness. See Eccles. x. 13. The Jew's conference with our Saviour began with arguments: "We be Abraham's seed," said they, etc.; but proceeded to blasphemies: "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" and ended in cruelty: "Then took they up stones to cast at him." John viii. 33, 48, 59. This also is the base disposition of a bad tongue to hate those whom it afflicts: Prov. xxvi. 28.

The mischief of the tongue may further appear by the mercy of being delivered from it, for, 1. So God hath promised it (Job v. 15, 21). "God saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty," and "thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue," or from being betongued, as some render it, that is, from being, as it were, caned or cudgelled with the tongues of others. "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues" (Ps. xxxi. 20); that is, from all calumnies, reproaches, evil speakings of all kinds. God will preserve the good names of his people from the blots and bespatterings of malicious men, as kings protect their favourites against slanders and clamours. 2. So the saints have prayed for it, as David: "*Deliver my soul, O* LORD, *from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.*"—*Edward Reyner.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Deliver my soul, O* LORD, *from lying lips,*" etc. In the drop of venom which distils from the sting of the smallest insect, or the spike of the nettle-leaf, there is concentrated the quintessence of a poison so subtle that the microscope cannot distinguish it, and yet so virulent that it can inflame the blood, irritate the whole constitution, and convert day and night into restless misery; so it is sometimes with the words of the slanderer.—*Frederick William Robertson.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Lying lips*" bore false witness against him, or with a "*deceitful tongue*" tried to ensnare him, and to draw something from him, on which they might ground an accusation.—*George Horne.*

*Verse* 3.—"*What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?*" What dost thou expect, "*thou false tongue,*" in pleading a bad cause? What fee or reward hast thou for being an accuser instead of an advocate? What shall it profit thee (as we put it in the margin); what shalt thou gain by thy deceitful tongue? or (as our margin hath it again), "*What shall the deceitful tongue give unto thee,*" that thou goest about slandering thy brother, and tearing his good name? Hath thy deceitful tongue houses or lands to give thee? hath it any treasures of gold and silver to bestow upon thee? Surely, as itself is, so it gives only "*Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper*" as the next verse intimates. . . . . The tongue indeed will speak often in these cases *gratis*, or without a fee; but it never doth without danger and damage to the speaker. As such speakers shoot arrows, like the arrows of the mighty, and as they scatter coals, like the coals of juniper, so they usually get an arrow in their own sides, and not only burn their fingers, but heap coals of fire upon their own heads. Ungodly men will do mischief to other men purely for mischief's sake: yet when once mischief is done it proves most mischievous to the doers of it; and while they hold their brethren's heaviness a profit, though they are never the better, they shall feel and find themselves in a short time much the worse.—*Joseph Caryl.*

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*Verses* 3, 4.—"*What shall be given?*" Intimating that his enemy expected some great reward for his malice against David; but, saith the Psalmist, he shall have "*sharp arrows of the Almighty, with coals of juniper*"; as if he had said, "Whatever reward he have from men, this shall be his reward from God."—*John Jackson, in "The Morning Exercises,"* 1661.

*Verses* 3, 4.—The victim of slander, in these heavy complaints he has just uttered, may be indulging in excess, which pious friends are represented as coming forward to reprove by reminding him how little a true servant of God can be really injured by slander. Hence, as in the margin of our Bibles, the psalm assumes the dramatic form, and represents his fellow-worshippers as asking the complainer: What evil, O servant of God, *can the false tongue give to thee!* Nursling of Omnipotence, *what can it do to thee!* . . . . . The answer of suffering nature and bleeding peace still returns: "*It is like the sharp arrows of the mighty, like coals of juniper.*" An arrow from the bow of a mighty warrior, that flies unseen and unsuspected to its mark, and whose presence is only known when it quivers in the victim's heart, not unaptly represents the silent and deadly flight of slander; while the fire which the desert pilgrim kindles on the sand, from the dry roots of the juniper, a wood which, of all that are known to him, throws out the fiercest and most continued heat, is not less powerfully descriptive of the intense pain and the lasting injury of a false and malicious tongue.—*Robert Nisbet.*

*Verses* 3, 4.—"*Coals of juniper,*" these "*shall be given unto thee.*" As if he had said, thou shalt have the hottest coals, such coals as will maintain heat longest, implying that the hottest and most lasting wrath of God should be their portion. Some naturalists say that coals of juniper raked up in the ashes will keep fire a whole year; but I stay not upon this.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse* 4.—"*Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.*" The world's sin is the world's punishment. A correspondence is frequently observed between the transgression and the retribution. . . . . This law of correspondence seem to be here indicated. Similar figures are employed to express the offence and the punishment of the wicked. "*They bend their tongue like a bow for lies.*" "*Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot in secret at the perfect.*" But let the slanderer be upon his guard. There is another bow besides that in his possession. The arrows are sharp and burning; and when they are sent from the bow by the arm of Omnipotence, nothing can resist their force, and in mortal agony his enemies bite the dust. "He hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death: he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." "God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded; so shall they make their own tongue fall upon themselves." This train of thought is also pursued in the illustration of fire. James compares the tongue of slander to fire. "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among the members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." Such is the tongue, and here is the punishment: "*Coals of juniper,*" remarkable for their long retention of heat. And yet what a feeble illustration of the wrath of God, which burns down to the lowest hell! "His lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire." Liars are excluded from heaven by a special enactment of the Sovereign; and all of them "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" With what solemn awe should we not cry out to the Lord, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men!"—*N. McMichael, in "The Pilgrim Psalms,"* 1860.

*Verse* 4.—"*Sharp arrows of the mighty.*" He compareth wicked doctrine to an *arrow* which is not blunt, but *sharp;* and moreover which is cast, not

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of him that is weak and feeble, but that is strong and *mighty;* so that there is danger on both sides, as well of the arrow which is sharp and able to pierce, as also of him which with great violence hurleth the same.—*Martin Luther.*

*Verse* 4.—"*Arrows.*" "*Coals of juniper.*" When the *tongue* is compared to "*arrows,*" there is a reference (according to the Midrash), to the irrevocableness of the tongue's work. Even the lifted sword may be stayed, but the shot arrow may not. The special point to be drawn out in the mention of "coals of *juniper,*" is the unextinguishableness of such fuel. There is a marvellous story in the Midrash which illustrates this very well. Two men in the desert sat down under a juniper tree, and gathered sticks of it wherewith they cooked their food. After a year they passed over the same spot where was the dust of what they had burned; and, remarking that it was now twelve months since they had the fire, they walked fearlessly upon the dust, and their feet were burned by the "coals" beneath it, which were still unextinguished.—*H. T. Armfield.*

*Verse* 4.—"*Coals of juniper.*" The fire of the *rothem* burns for a very long time covered with its ashes; like malignant slander. But the secret malignity becomes its own terrible punishment.—*William Kay.*

*Verse* 4.—"*Coals of juniper.*" We here [at Wâdí Kinnah] found several Bedouins occupied in collecting brushwood, which they burn into charcoal for the Cairo market; they prefer for this purpose the thick roots of the shrub Retham, *Genista rætam* of Forskal, which grows here in abundance.—*Johann Ludwig Burckhardt,* 1784—1817.

*Verse* 4.—"*Coals of juniper.*" At this time we spoke four "ships of the desert," bound for Cairo, and loaded with "*coals of juniper,*" or, in other words, with charcoal made from the roots or branches of the *ratam,* or white broom of the desert, the identical bush referred to by the sacred writer.—*John Wilson, in "The Lands of the Bible visited and described,"* 1847.

*Verse* 4.—By "*coals of juniper,*" we understand arrows made of this wood, which when heated possesses the property of retaining the heat for a long time; and consequently, arrows of this kind, after having been placed in the fire, would in the hands of the warrior do terrible execution.

Some persons think that this verse is not to be understood as a figurative description of calumny, but rather of the punishment which God will inflict upon the calumniator. They therefore regard this as an answer to the question in the preceding verse: "*What shall he give?*" etc. — *George Phillips.*

*Verse* 5.—"*Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!*" Mesech was a son of Japheth; and the name here signifies his descendants, the Mosques, who occupied that wild mountain region which lies between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. Kedar, again, was a son of Ishmael; and the name here signifies his descendants, the wandering tribes, whose "hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them." There is no geographical connection between those two nations: the former being upon the north of Palestine, and the latter upon the south. The connection is a moral one. They are mentioned together, because they were fierce and warlike barbarians. David had never lived on the shores of the Caspian Sea, or in the Arabian wilderness; and he means no more than this, that the persons with whom he now dwelt were as savage and quarrelsome as Mesech and Kedar. After a similar fashion, we call rude and troublesome persons Turks, Tartars, and Hottentots. David exclaims, I am just as miserable among these haters of peace, as if I had taken up my abode with those savage and treacherous tribes.—*N. McMichael.*

*Verse* 5.—"*Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech,*" etc. David exclaims, *Alas for me!* because, dwelling amongst false brethren and a bastard race of Abraham, he was wrongfully molested and tormented by them, although

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he had behaved himself towards them in good conscience. Since then, at the present day, in the church of Rome, religion is dishonoured by all manner of disgraceful imputations, faith torn in pieces, light turned into darkness, and the majesty of God exposed to the grossest mockeries, it will certainly be impossible for those who have any feeling of true piety within them to lie in the midst of such pollutions without great anguish of spirit.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 6.—The Arabs are naturally thievish and treacherous; and it sometimes happens, that those very persons are overtaken and pillaged in the morning who were entertained the night before with all the instances of friendship and hospitality. Neither are they to be accused for plundering strangers only, and attacking almost every person whom they find unarmed and defenceless, but for those many implacable and hereditary animosities which continually subsist among them; literally fulfilling the prophecy of Hagar, that "Ishmael should be a wild man; his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him."—*Thomas Shaw*, 1692—1751.

*Verse* 6.—Our Lord was with the wild beasts in the wilderness. There are not a few who would rather face even these than the angry spirits which, alas, are still to be found even in Christian Churches.—*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1879.

*Verses* 6, 7.—What holy and gentle delight is associated with the very name of *peace!* Peace resting upon our bosom, and soothing all its cares: peace resting upon our households, and folding all the members in one loving embrace: peace resting upon our country, and pouring abundance from her golden horn: peace resting upon all nations, and binding them together with the threefold cord of a common humanity, a common interest, and a common religion! The man who hates peace is a dishonour to the race, an enemy to his brother, and a traitor to his God. He hates Christ, who is the Prince of peace. He hates Christians, who are men of peace.—*N. McMichael.*

*Verse* 7.—"*I am for peace,*" etc. Jesus was a man of peace; he came into our world, and was worshipped at his nativity as the Prince of peace: there was universal peace throughout the world at the time of his birth; he lived to make peace "by the blood of his cross:" he died to complete it. When he was going out of the world, he said to his disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid": John xiv. 27. When he was risen from the dead, and made his first appearance to his disciples, he said unto them, "Peace be unto you": he is the peace-maker: the Holy Ghost is the peace-bringer: his gospel is the gospel of peace; it contains the peace of God which passeth all understanding. "*I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.*" The bulk of the Jewish nation abhorred Christ, they were for putting him to death; to avenge which, the Lord brought the Roman army against them, and many of them were utterly destroyed. So David literally was for peace with Saul; yet, when opportunities made way for any negotiations, it was soon discovered Saul was for war, instead of peace, with him.

May we see how this, which is the introductory psalm to those fourteen which follow, styled *Songs of Degrees*, hath a concern with our Lord Jesus Christ; and that David the son of Jesse was in many cases a type of him, and several of his enemies, sorrows, and griefs, forerunning figures of what would befall Messiah, and come upon him. Amen.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

*Verse* 7.—"*I am for peace.*" Good men love peace, pray for it, seek it, pursue it, will give anything but a good conscience for it. Compare Matt. v. 9; Heb. xii. 14: *W. S. Plumer.* "It is a mark of a pious man, as far

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as in him is, to seek peace": *Amesius.* "I would not give one hour of brotherly love for a whole eternity of contention": *Dr. Ruffner.*

*Verse* 7.—"*When I speak, they are for war.*" He spoke with all respect and kindness that could be; proposed methods of accommodation; spoke reason, spoke love; but they would not so much as hear him patiently; but cried out, To arms! To arms! so fierce and implacable were they, and so bent on mischief. Such were Christ's enemies: for his love they were his adversaries; and for his good words and good works they stoned him; and if we meet with such enemies we must not think it strange, nor love peace the less for our seeking it in vain. "Be not overcome of evil," no, not of such evil as this; "but," even when thus tried, still try to "overcome evil with good."—*Matthew Henry.*

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## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

*Verse* 1.—*A reminiscence.* I. It is threefold; distress, prayer, deliverance. II. It has a threefold bearing: it excites my hope, stimulates my petitions, and arouses my gratitude.

*Verse* 1.—I. Special trouble: "In my distress." II. Special prayer: "I cried unto the Lord." III. Special favour: "He heard me."—*G. R.*

*Verse* 2.—The unjustly slandered have, besides the avenging majesty of their God to protect them, many other consolations, as—1. The consciousness of innocence to sustain them. 2. The promise of divine favour to support them: "I will hide thee from the scourge of the tongue." 3. There is the consideration to soothe: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you," etc. 4. That a lie has not usually a long life. 5. There is, lastly, for comfort, the repairing influence of time.—*R. Nisbet.*

*Verse* 2.—*A prayer against slander.* We are liable to it; it would do us great injury and cause us great pain; yet none but the Lord can protect us from it, or deliver us out of it.

*Verse* 3.—*The rewards of calumny.* What can they be? What ought they to be? What have they been?

*Verse* 3.—I. What the reviler does for others. II. What he does to himself. III. What God will do with him.

*Verse* 4.—The nature of slander and the punishment of slander.

*Verse* 4.—I. The tongue is sharper than an arrow. 1. It is shot in private. 2. It is tipped with poison. 3. It is polished with seeming kindness. 4. It is aimed at the tenderest part. II. The tongue is more destructive than fire. Its scandals spread with greater rapidity. They consume that which other fires cannot touch, and they are less easily quenched. "The tongue," says an Apostle, "is a fire . . . and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." A fiery dart of the wicked one.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 5.—*Bad lodgings.* Only the wicked can be at home with the wicked. Our dwelling with them is trying, and yet it may be useful (1) to them, (2) to us: it tries our graces, reveals our character, abates our pride, drives us to prayer, and makes us long to be home.

*Verse* 5.—I. None but the wicked enjoy the company of the wicked. II. None but the worldly enjoy the company of worldlings. III. None but the righteous enjoy the company of the righteous.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 6.—I. Trying company. II. Admirable behaviour. III. Undesirable consequences: "When I speak, they are for war."

*Verse* 7.—*The character of the man of God.* He is at peace. He is for peace. He is peace. He shall have peace.

*Verse* 7.—I. Piety and peace are united. II. So are wickedness and war.—*G. R.*

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# PSALM CXXI.

TITLE, ETC.— *This bears no other title than* "A Song of degrees." *It is several steps in advance of its predecessor, for it tells of the peace of God's house, and the guardian care of the Lord, while Psalm cxx. bemoans the departure of peace from the good man's abode, and his exposure to the venomous assaults of slanderous tongues. In the first instance his eyes looked around with anguish, but here they look up with hope. From the constant recurrence of the word* keep, *we are led to name this song* "a Psalm to the keeper of Israel." *Were it not placed among the Pilgrim Psalms we should regard it as a martial hymn, fitted for the evensong of one who slept upon the tented field. It is a soldier's song as well as a traveller's hymn. There is an ascent in the psalm itself which rises to the greatest elevation of restful confidence.*

## EXPOSITION.

I WILL lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

2 My help *cometh* from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The LORD *is* thy keeper: the LORD *is* thy shade upon thy right hand.

6 The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

8 The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

1. "*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.*" It is wise to look to the strong for strength. Dwellers in valleys are subject to many disorders for which there is no cure but a sojourn in the uplands, and it is well when they shake off their lethargy and resolve upon a climb. Down below they are the prey of marauders, and to escape from them the surest method is to fly to the strongholds upon the mountains. Often before the actual ascent the sick and plundered people looked towards the hills and longed to be upon their summits. The holy man who here sings a choice sonnet looked away from the slanderers by whom he was tormented to the Lord who saw all from his high places, and was ready to pour down succour for his injured servant. Help comes to saints only from above, they look elsewhere in vain: let us lift up our eyes with hope, expectancy, desire, and confidence. Satan will endeavour to keep our eyes upon our sorrows that we may be disquieted and discouraged; be it ours firmly to resolve that we will look out and look up, for there is good cheer for the eyes, and they that lift up their eyes to the eternal hills shall soon have their hearts lifted up also. The purposes of God; the divine attributes; the immutable promises; the covenant, ordered in all things and sure; the providence, predestination, and proved faithfulness of the Lord—these are

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the hills to which we must lift up our eyes, for from these our help must come. It is our resolve that we will not be bandaged and blindfolded, but will lift up our eyes.

Or is the text in the interrogative? Does he ask, "Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills?" Does he feel that the highest places of the earth can afford him no shelter? Or does he renounce the idea of recruits hastening to his standard from the hardy mountaineers? and hence does he again enquire, "Whence cometh my help?" If so, the next verse answers the question, and shows whence all help must come.

2. "*My help cometh from the* LORD, *which made heaven and earth.*" What we need is help,—help powerful, efficient, constant: we need a very present help in trouble. What a mercy that we have it in our God. Our hope is in Jehovah, for our help comes from him. Help is on the road, and will not fail to reach us in due time, for he who sends it to us was never known to be too late. Jehovah who created all things is equal to every emergency; heaven and earth are at the disposal of him who made them, therefore let us be very joyful in our infinite helper. He will sooner destroy heaven and earth than permit his people to be destroyed, and the perpetual hills themselves shall bow rather than he shall fail whose ways are everlasting. We are bound to look beyond heaven and earth to him who made them both: it is vain to trust the creatures: it is wise to trust the Creator.

3. "*He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.*" Though the paths of life are dangerous and difficult, yet we shall stand fast, for Jehovah will not permit our feet to slide; and if he will not suffer it we shall not suffer it. If our foot will be thus kept we may be sure that our head and heart will be preserved also. In the original the words express a wish or prayer,—"May he not suffer thy foot to be moved." Promised preservation should be the subject of perpetual prayer; and we may pray believingly; for those who have God for their keeper shall be safe from all the perils of the way. Among the hills and ravines of Palestine the literal keeping of the feet is a great mercy; but in the slippery ways of a tried and afflicted life, the boon of upholding is of priceless value, for a single false step might cause us a fall fraught with awful danger. To stand erect and pursue the even tenor of our way is a blessing which only God can give, which is worthy of the divine hand, and worthy also of perennial gratitude. Our feet shall move in progress, but they shall not be moved to their overthrow. "*He that keepeth thee will not slumber,*"—or "thy keeper shall not slumber." We should not stand a moment if our keeper were to sleep; we need him by day and by night; not a single step can be safely taken except under his guardian eye. This is a choice stanza in a pilgrim song. God is the convoy and body-guard of his saints. When dangers are awake around us we are safe, for our Preserver is awake also, and will not permit us to be taken unawares. No fatigue or exhaustion can cast our God into sleep; his watchful eyes are never closed.

4. "*Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*" The consoling truth must be repeated: it is too rich to be dismissed in a single line. It were well if we always imitated the sweet singer, and would dwell a little upon a choice doctrine, sucking the honey from it. What a glorious title is in the Hebrew—"*The keeper of Israel,*" and how delightful to think that no form of unconsciousness ever steals over him, neither the deep slumber nor the lighter sleep. He will never suffer the house to be broken up by the silent thief; he is ever on the watch, and speedily perceives every intruder. This is a subject of wonder, a theme for attentive consideration, therefore the word "*Behold*" is set up as a waymark. Israel fell asleep, but his God was awake. Jacob had neither walls, nor curtains, nor body-guard around him; but the Lord was in that place though Jacob knew it not, and therefore the defenceless man was safe as in a castle. In after days he mentioned God under this enchanting

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name—"The God that led me all my life long": perhaps David alludes to that passage in this expression. The word "*keepeth*" is also full of meaning: he keeps us as a rich man keeps his treasures, as a captain keeps a city with a garrison, as a royal guard keeps his monarch's head. If the former verse is in strict accuracy a prayer, this is the answer to it; it affirms the matter thus, "Lo, he shall not slumber nor sleep—the Keeper of Israel." It may also be worthy of mention that in verse three the Lord is spoken of as the personal keeper of one individual, and here of all those who are in his chosen nation, described as Israel: mercy to one saint is the pledge of blessing to them all. Happy are the pilgrims to whom this psalm is a safe-conduct; they may journey all the way to the celestial city without fear.

5. "*The Lord is thy keeper.*" Here the preserving One, who had been spoken of by pronouns in the two previous verses, is distinctly named—Jehovah is thy keeper. What a mint of meaning lies here: the sentence is a mass of bullion, and when coined and stamped with the king's name it will bear all our expenses between our birthplace on earth and our rest in heaven. Here is a glorious person—*Jehovah*, assuming a gracious office and fulfilling it in person,—Jehovah is thy *keeper*, in behalf of a favoured individual—*thy*, and a firm assurance of revelation that it is even so at this hour—Jehovah *is* thy keeper. Can we appropriate the divine declaration? If so, we may journey onward to Jerusalem and know no fear; yea, we may journey through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil. "*The* LORD *is thy shade upon thy right hand.*" A shade gives protection from burning heat and glaring light. We cannot bear too much blessing; even divine goodness, which is a right-hand dispensation, must be toned down and shaded to suit our infirmity, and this the Lord will do for us. He will bear a shield before us, and guard the right arm with which we fight the foe. That member which has the most of labour shall have the most of protection. When a blazing sun pours down its burning beams upon our heads the Lord Jehovah himself will interpose to shade us, and that in the most honourable manner, acting as our right-hand attendant, and placing us in comfort and safety. "The Lord at thy right hand shall smite through kings." How different this from the portion of the ungodly ones who have Satan standing at their right hand, and of those of whom Moses said, "their defence has departed from them." God is as near us as our shadow, and we are as safe as angels.

6. "*The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*" None but the Lord could shelter us from these tremendous forces. These two great lights rule the day and the night, and under the lordship of both we shall labour or rest in equal safety. Doubtless there are dangers of the light and of the dark, but in both and from both we shall be preserved—literally from excessive heat and from baneful chills; mystically from any injurious effects which might follow from doctrine bright or dim; spiritually from the evils of prosperity and adversity; eternally from the strain of overpowering glory and from the pressure of terrible events, such as judgment and the burning of the world. Day and night make up all time: thus the ever-present protection never ceases. All evil may be ranked as under the sun or the moon, and if neither of these can smite us we are indeed secure. God has not made a new sun or a fresh moon for his chosen, they exist under the same outward circumstances as others, but the power to *smite* is in their case removed from temporal agencies; saints are enriched, and not injured, by the powers which govern the earth's condition; to them has the Lord given "the precious things brought forth by the sun, and the precious things put forth by the moon," while at the same moment he has removed from them all bale and curse of heat or damp, of glare or chill.

7. "*The* LORD *shall preserve thee from all evil,*" or *keep* thee from all evil. It is a great pity that our admirable translation did not keep to the word

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*keep* all through the psalm, for all along it is one. God not only keeps his own in all evil times but from all evil influences and operations, yea, from evils themselves. This is a far-reaching word of covering: it includes everything and excludes nothing: the wings of Jehovah amply guard his own from evils great and small, temporary and eternal. There is a most delightful double personality in this verse: Jehovah keeps the believer, not by agents, but by himself; and the person protected is definitely pointed out by the word *thee*,—it is not our estate or name which is shielded, but the proper personal man. To make this even more intensely real and personal another sentence is added, "*The* LORD *shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul*,"—or Jehovah will keep thy soul. Soul-keeping is the soul of keeping. If the soul be kept all is kept. The preservation of the greater includes that of the less so far as it is essential to the main design: the kernel shall be preserved, and in order thereto the shell shall be preserved also. God is the sole keeper of the soul. Our soul is kept from the dominion of sin, the infection of error, the crush of despondency, the puffing up of pride; kept from the world, the flesh, and the devil; kept for holier and greater things; kept in the love of God; kept unto the eternal kingdom and glory. What can harm a soul that is kept of the Lord?

8. "*The* LORD *shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.*" When we go out in the morning to labour, and come home at eventide to rest, Jehovah shall keep us. When we go out in youth to begin life, and come in at the end to die, we shall experience the same keeping. Our exits and our entrances are under one protection. Three times have we the phrase, "Jehovah shall keep," as if the sacred Trinity thus sealed the word to make it sure: ought not all our fears to be slain by such a threefold flight of arrows? What anxiety can survive this triple promise? This keeping is eternal; continuing from this time forth, even for evermore. The whole church is thus assured of everlasting security: the final perseverance of the saints is thus ensured, and the glorious immortality of believers is guaranteed. Under the ægis of such a promise we may go on pilgrimage without trembling, and venture into battle without dread. None are so safe as those whom God keeps; none so much in danger as the self-secure. To goings out and comings in belong peculiar dangers, since every change of position turns a fresh quarter to the foe, and it is for these weak points that an especial security is provided: Jehovah will keep the door when it opens and closes, and this he will perseveringly continue to do so long as there is left a single man that trusteth in him, as long as a danger survives, and, in fact, as long as time endures. Glory be unto the Keeper of Israel, who is endeared to us under that title, since our growing sense of weakness makes us feel more deeply than ever our need of being kept. Over the reader we would breathe a benediction, couched in the verse of Keble.

"God keep thee safe from harm and sin,
Thy spirit keep; the Lord watch o'er
Thy going out, thy coming in,
From this time, evermore."

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## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

*Title*, "*A Song of Degrees.*"—It has been ingeniously pointed out that these "*degrees*" or "*steps*" consist in the reiteration of a word or thought occurring in one clause, verse, or stanza, which in the next verse or stanza is used, as it were, as a *step* (or degree) by which to ascend to another and higher truth. Thus in our psalm, the idea of "*my help*," expressed in verse 1, is repeated in verse 2. This has now become a step by which in verse 3 we reach the higher truth or explanation of "*my help*," as: "*He that keepeth thee will not slumber*," the same idea being with slight modification re-embodied in verse 4. Another "degree" is then reached in verse 5, when "He who *slumbers* not" is designated as *Jehovah*, the same idea once more enlarged upon being (the *word* occurring twice in verse 5) in verse 6. The last and highest degree of this song is attained in verse 7, when the truth implied in the word *Jehovah* unfolds itself in its application to our *preservation*, which, with further enlargement, is once more repeated in verse 8. *Perhaps* some internal connexion might be traced between all the fifteen Psalms of Degrees. At any rate, it will not be difficult to trace the same structure in each of the psalms "of Degrees," making allowance for occasional devotions and modifications.—*Alfred Edersheim, in "The Golden Diary,"* 1877.

*Whole Psalm.*—According to verse 1 this psalm was designed to be sung in view of the mountains of Jerusalem, and is manifestly an evening song for the sacred band of pilgrims, to be sung in the last night-watch, the figures of which are also peculiarly suitable for a pilgrim song; and with Ps. cxxii. which, according to the express announcement in the introduction, was sung, when the sacred pilgrim trains had reached the gates of Jerusalem, and halted for the purpose of forming in order, for the solemn procession into the Sanctuary, Ps. cxxxiv. . . . .

The idea is a very probable one, that the psalm was the evening song of the sacred pilgrim band, sung on retiring to rest upon the last evening, when the long wished-for termination of their wandering, the mountains of Jerusalem, had come into view in the distance. In this we obtain a suitable connection with the following psalm, which would be sung *one* station further on when the pilgrims were at the gates of Jerusalem. In this case we find an explanation of the fact, that in the middle point of the psalm there stands the Lord as the "*keeper*" of Israel, with reference to the declaration, "I keep thee," which was addressed to the patriarch as he slept on his pilgrimage: and in this case also "he neither slumbereth nor sleepeth" is seen in its true light.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

It has been said Mr. Romaine read this psalm every day; and sure it is, that every word in it is calculated to encourage and strengthen our faith and hope in God.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

*Verse* 1.—"*I will lift up mine eyes*," etc. Since we, being burthened with the effects of worldly pleasures, and also with other cares and troubles, can by no means ascend to thee that art on the top of so high a mountain, accompanied with so many legions of angels that still attend upon thee, we have no remedy, but with thy prophet David now to lift up the eyes of our hearts and minds towards thee, and to cry for help to come down from thee to us, thy poor and wretched servants.—*Sir Anthony Cope, in "Meditations on Twenty Select Psalms,"* 1547.

*Verse* 1.—"*I will lift up mine eyes*," etc. In thy agony of a troubled conscience always look upwards unto a gracious God to keep thy soul steady; for looking downward on thyself thou shalt find nothing but what will increase thy fear, infinite sins, good deeds few, and imperfect: it is not thy faith, but God's faithfulness thou must rely upon; casting thine eyes downwards on thyself, to behold the great distance betwixt what thou deservest and what thou desirest, is enough to make thee giddy, stagger,

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and reel into despair. Ever therefore *lift up thine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh thy help*, never viewing the deep dale of thy own unworthiness, but to abate thy pride when tempted to presumption.—*Thomas Fuller* (1608—1661), *in "The Cause and Cure of a Wounded Conscience."*

*Verse* 1.—"*The hills.*" There can be no doubt that in Palestine we are in the "Highlands" of Asia. This was the more remarkable in connection with the Israelites, because they were the only civilized nation then existing in the world, which dwelt in a mountainous country. . . . . The Hebrew people was raised above the other ancient states, equally in its moral and in its physical relations. From the Desert of Arabia to Hebron is a continual ascent, and from that ascent there is no descent of any importance, except to the plains of the Jordan, Esdraelon, and the coast. From a mountain sanctuary, as it were, Israel looked over the world. . . . . It was to the "mountains" of Israel that the exile lifted up his eyes, as the place *from whence his help came.—Arthur Penrhyn Stanley.*

*Verse* 1.—"*The hills, from whence cometh my help.*" See no riches but in grace, no health but in piety, no beauty but in holiness, no treasure but in heaven, no delight but in "the things above."—*Anthony Farindon.*

*Verse* 1.—"*From whence cometh my help.*" The natives of India used to say that when Sir Henry Laurence looked twice to heaven and then to earth he knew what to do.

To Heaven I lift mine eye,
To Heaven, Jehovah's throne,
For there my Saviour sits on high,
And thence shall strength and aid supply
To all He calls His own.

He will not faint nor fail,
Nor cause thy feet to stray:
For him no weary hours assail,
Nor evening darkness spreads her veil
O'er his eternal day.

Beneath that light divine
Securely shalt thou move;
The sun with milder beams shall shine,
And eve's still queen her lamp incline,
Benignant from above.

For he, thy God and Friend,
Shall keep thy soul from harm,
In each sad scene of doubt attend,
And guide thy life, and bless thy end,
With his almighty arm.

—*John Bowdler*, 1814.

*Verses* 1, 2.—Faint at the close of life's journey, a Christian pilgrim repeated the line,—

"Will he not his help afford?"

She quoted it several times, trying to recall the song in which it occurs, and asked that the once familiar hymn, part of the voice of which she caught, might be all fetched home to her mind again; and she was greatly refreshed and comforted when we read at her bedside Charles Wesley's spirited paraphrase, beginning,—

"To the hills I lift mine eyes,
The everlasting hills;
Streaming thence in fresh supplies,
My soul the Spirit feels.

Will he not his help afford?
Help, while yet I ask, is given:
God comes down; the God and Lord
That made both earth and heaven."

—*Edward Jewitt Robinson, in "The Caravan and the Temple,"* 1878.

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*Verses* 1—3.—

Look away to Jesus,
Look away from all!
Then we need not stumble,
Then we shall not fall.
From each snare that lureth,
Foe or phantom grim,
Safety this ensureth,
Look away to him!

—*Frances Ridley Havergal.*

*Verse* 2.—"*My help cometh from the Lord.*" I require to remember that *my help cometh from the Lord*, not only when seemingly there is no *outward* help from men or otherwise, but also and especially when all seems to go well with me,—when abundance of friends and help are at hand. For then, surely, I am most in danger of making an arm of flesh my trust, and thus reaping its curse; or else of saying to my soul, "Take thine ease," and finding the destruction which attends such folly.—*Alfred Edersheim.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Maker of heaven and earth*," and therefore mighty to help.—*James G. Murphy.*

*Verse* 3.—"*He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.*" The sliding of the foot is a frequent description of misfortune, for example, Ps. xxxviii. 16, lxvi. 9, and a very natural one in mountainous Canaan, where a single slip of the foot was often attended with great danger. The language here naturally refers to complete, lasting misfortune.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

*Verse* 3.—"*He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.*" A man cannot go without moving of his feet; and a man cannot stand whose feet are moved. The foot by a *synechdoche* is put for the whole body, and the body for the whole outward estate; so that, "*He will not suffer thy foot to be moved*," is, he will not suffer thee or thine to be moved or violently cast down. The power of thine opposers shall not prevail over thee, for the power of God sustains thee. Many are striking at thy heels, but they cannot strike them up while God holds thee up. If the will of thine enemies might stand, thou shouldst quickly fall; but God "*will not suffer thy foot to be moved.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verses* 3—8.—There is something very striking in the assurance that the Lord will not suffer the foot even of the most faint and wearied one to be moved. The everlasting mountains stand fast, and we feel as if, like Mount Zion, they could not be removed for ever; but the step of man—how feeble in itself, how liable to stumble or trip even against a pebble in the way! Yet that foot is as firm and immoveable in God's protection as the hills themselves. It is one of his own sweet promises, that he will give his angels charge over every child of his, that he come to no harm by the way. But, oh, how immeasurably beyond even the untiring wings of angels is the love promised here! that love which engages to protect from every danger, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. In the hours of occupation and hurry, in the conflicts and perils of the day, in the helplessness of sleep, in the glare and heat of the noon-day, amid the damps and dews of night, that unslumbering eye is still over every child for his good. Man, indeed, goeth forth to his work and to his labour till the evening; but alike as he goes forth in the morning, and as he returns in the evening, the Lord still holds him up in all his goings forth and his comings in; no manner of evil shall befall him. And oh! what a sweet addition is it to the promise, "He shall preserve *thy soul.*" It is the very argument of the apostle, and the very inference he draws, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry,"—"He neither slumbereth nor sleepeth,"—and then he asks, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" From the very dawn of life to its latest close, even for evermore, "He will preserve thee from all evil; he will preserve thy soul."—*Barton Bouchier.*

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*Verses* 3, 4, 5.—A great practical difficulty is to find a "keeper" who will remain *awake during the whole night.* The weariness of those who keep a faithful watch, and their longing for day during the tedious lonely hours of darkness, is alluded to in a graphic and beautiful figure of the Psalmist—

> "My soul waiteth for the Lord
> More than keepers for the morning,
> More than keepers for the morning."

The usual method adopted to secure due vigilance is to require the man to call out loudly, or to blow a whistle, every quarter of an hour. . . . . Yet, notwithstanding all precautions, as soon as sleep falls on the tired camp, it is too often the case that the hireling keeper lies down on the ground, wraps around him his thick *abaiyeh*, or cloak, and, careless of his charge, or overcome with weariness, yields himself up to his drowsy propensities.

Viewed in the light of these facts, how full of condescension and cheer is the assurance of God's never-ceasing care—

> "He who keepeth thee will not slumber.
> Behold, he who keepeth Israel
> Doth not slumber or sleep.
> Jehovah is thy keeper."

While the services of the keeper constitute at all times a marked feature of life in Palestine, they are perhaps more needed when travelling through the country than at any other time. Then, when the moving camp is nightly pitched in strange fields, it becomes absolutely necessary to apply to the nearest authorities for a nocturnal guardian, before one can safely lie down to rest. Now this Psalm cxxi. being one of "the Songs of Degrees," was probably composed to be sung on the way to Jerusalem, as a pilgrim hymn, when the Israelites were coming up annually to keep the three great feasts. As a journeying psalm, it would therefore have peculiar significance in its allusion to *the keeper by night.—James Neil, in "Palestine Explored,"* 1882.

*Verses* 3, 4.—When one asked Alexander how he could sleep so soundly and securely in the midst of danger, he told him that Parmenio watched. Oh, how securely may they sleep over whom *he* watcheth that never slumbers nor sleeps!—*From "The Dictionary of Illustrations,"* 1873.

*Verses* 3, 4.—A poor woman, as the Eastern story has it, came to the Sultan one day, and asked compensation for the loss of some property. "How did you lose it?" said the monarch. "I fell asleep," was the reply, "and a robber entered my dwelling." "Why did you fall asleep?" "I fell asleep because I believed that you were awake." The Sultan was so much delighted with the answer of the woman, that he ordered her loss to be made up. But what is true, only by a legal fiction, of human governments, that they never sleep, is true in the most absolute sense with reference to the divine government. We can sleep in safety because our God is ever awake. We are safe because he never slumbers. Jacob had a beautiful picture of the ceaseless care of Divine Providence on the night when he fled from his father's house. The lonely traveller slept on the ground, with the stones for his pillow, and the sky for his canopy. He had a wondrous vision of a ladder stretching from earth to heaven, and on which angels were seen ascending and descending. And he heard Jehovah saying to him, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest."—*N. McMichael.*

*Verse* 4.—It is necessary, observes S. Bernard, that "*he who keepeth Israel*" should "*neither slumber nor sleep,*" for he who assails Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. And as the One is anxious about us, so is the other to slay and destroy us, and his one care is that he who has once been turned aside may never come back.—*Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 4.—"*Slumber.*" "*Sleep.*" There is no climax in these words, as

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some have supposed. Etymologically, the first is the stronger word, and it occurs in Ps. lxxvi. 5 [6] of the sleep of death. In this instance there is no real distinction between the two. Possibly there may be an allusion to the nightly encampment, and the sentries of the caravan.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

*Verse* 4.—"*He . . . shall neither slumber nor sleep.*" This form of expression, *he will not slumber nor sleep*, would be improper in other languages, according to the idiom of which it should rather be, *He will not sleep, yea, he will not slumber:* but when the Hebrews invert this order, they argue from the greater to the less. The sense then is, that as God never slumbers even in the smallest degree, we need not be afraid of any harm befalling us while he is asleep.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 4.—"*He that keepeth Israel.*" With an allusion to Jacob, who slept at Bethel, and to whom the promise of God took this form, "And, behold, I am with thee, and will *keep* thee in all places whither thou goest": Gen. xxviii. 15.—*Aben Ezra, quoted by H. T. Armfield.*

*Verse* 4.—"*Shall neither slumber nor sleep.*" Man sleeps; a sentinel *may* slumber on his post by inattention, by long-continued wakefulness, or by weariness; a pilot *may* slumber at the helm; even a mother *may* fall asleep by the side of the sick child; but God is never exhausted, is never weary, is never inattentive. He never closes his eyes on the condition of his people, on the wants of the world.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 4.—A number of years ago Captain D. commanded a vessel sailing from Liverpool to New York, and on one voyage he had all his family with him on board the ship.

One night, when all were quietly asleep, there arose a sudden squall of wind, which came sweeping over the waters until it struck the vessel, and instantly threw her on her side, tumbling and crashing everything that was moveable, and awakening the passengers to a consciousness that they were in imminent peril.

Everyone on board was alarmed and uneasy, and some sprang from their berths and began to dress, that they might be ready for the worst.

Captain D. had a little girl on board, just eight years old, who, of course, awoke with the rest.

"What's the matter?" said the frightened child.

They told her a squall had struck the ship.

"Is father on deck?" said she.

"Yes; father's on deck."

The little thing dropped herself on her pillow again without a fear, and in a few moments was sleeping sweetly in spite of winds or waves.

Fear not the windy tempests wild,
Thy bark they shall not wreck;
Lie down and sleep, O helpless child!
Thy Father's on the deck.

—"*The Biblical Treasury*," 1873.

*Verses* 4, 5.—The same that is the protector of the church in general, is engaged for the preservation of every particular believer; the same wisdom, the same power, the same promises. "*He that keepeth Israel*" (verse 4), "*is thy keeper*" (verse 5). The Shepherd of the flock is the Shepherd of every sheep, and will take care that not one, even of the little ones, shall perish. —*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 5.—"*The Lord is thy keeper.*" Two principal points are asserted in these previous words. 1. Jehovah, and Jehovah alone, the omnipotent and self-existent God, is the Keeper and Preserver of his people. 2. The people of God are kept, at all times and in all circumstances, by his mighty power unto everlasting salvation; they are preserved even "for evermore." In the first particular, the divinity of the great Keeper is declared; and, in the

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second, the eternal security of his people through his omnipotence and faithfulness. This was the Psalmist's gospel. He preached it to others, and he felt it himself. He did not speculate upon what he did not understand; but he had a clear evidence, and a sweet perception, of these two glorious doctrines, which he delivered to the people. . . . This character, under the name of Jehovah, is the character of Christ. Just such a one is Jesus, the Shepherd of Israel. He says of himself to the Father, "Those that thou gavest me *I have kept*, and *none of them is lost*, but the Son of Perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." . . . . From what has been premised, it seems evident, that the keeper of the faithful is no other than Jehovah. This the Psalmist has proved. It appears equally evident that Christ is their Keeper and Preserver. This he hath declared himself; and his apostles have repeatedly declared it of him. It follows, therefore, that Christ is truly and essentially Jehovah. All the sophistry in the world cannot elude this conclusion; nor all the heretics in the world destroy the premises. And, if Christ be Jehovah, he is all that supreme, eternal, omnipotent being, which Arians, Socinians, and others deny him to be.—*Ambrose Serle, in "Horæ Solitariæ,"* 1815.

*Verse* 5.—"*Keeper.*" "*Shade.*" The titles of God are virtually promises. When he is called a sun, a shield, a strong tower, a hiding place, a portion. The titles of Christ, light of the world, bread of life, the way, the truth, and life; the titles of the Spirit, the Spirit of truth, of holiness, of glory, of grace, and supplication, the sealing, witnessing Spirit; faith may conclude as much out of these as out of promises. Is the Lord a sun? then he will influence me, etc. Is Christ life? then he will enliven me, etc.—*David Clarkson*, 1621—1686.

*Verse* 5.—"*Thy shade upon thy right hand.*" That is, always present with thee; or, as the Jewish Arab renders it, "Nigher than thy shadow at, or from thy right hand."—*Thomas Fenton, in "Annotations on the Book of Job and the Psalms,"* 1732.

*Verse* 5.—"*Thy shade.*" In eastern countries the sun's burning rays are often arrows by which premature death is inflicted; and when the Psalmist speaks of Jehovah as a shady covert for the righteous, that imagery suggests the idea of the "coup de soleil" or sunstroke as the evil avoided.—*J. F., in The Baptist Magazine*, 1831.

*Verse* 5.—"*Shade.*" The Hebrew word is צֵל, *tsel*, "a shadow," and hence it has been supposed that the words, "thy shadow at thy right hand," are a figurative expression, referring to the protection afforded by the shade of a tree against the scorching rays of the sun, or to the custom which prevails in tropical climates especially, of keeping off the intense heat of the sun by a portable screen, such as an umbrella or parasol. The word is often put for *defence* in general. Compare Num. xiv. 9; Isaiah xxx. 2; Jer. xlviii. 45. —*James Anderson.*

*Verses* 5—8.—How large a writ or patent of protection is granted here! No time shall be hurtful, neither "*day nor night*," which includes all times. Nothing shall hurt, neither *sun nor moon*, nor heat nor cold. These should include all annoyances. Nothing shall be hurt. "*Thy soul shall be preserved, thy outgoings and thy comings in shall be preserved.*" These include the whole person of man, and him in all his just affairs and actions. Nothing of man is safe without a guard, and nothing of man can be unsafe which is thus guarded. They should be kept who can say, "The Lord is our keeper"; and they cannot be kept, no, not by legions of angels, who have not the Lord for their keeper. None can keep us but he, and he hath promised to keep us "for evermore."—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse* 6.—"*The sun shall not smite thee.*" הִכָּה of the sun signifies to smite injuriously (Isai. xlix. 10), plants, so that they wither (Ps. cii. 5), and the head (Jonah iv. 8), so that symptoms of sunstroke (2 Kings iv. 19; Judith

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viii. 2 seq.) appear. The transferring of the word to the word is not zeugmatic. Even the moon's rays may become insupportable, may affect the eyes injuriously, and (more particularly in the equatorial regions) produce fatal inflammation of the brain. From the hurtful influences of nature that are round about him the promise extends in verses 7, 8 in every direction. Jahve, says the poet to himself, will keep (guard) thee against all evil, of whatever kind it may be and whencesoever it may threaten; he will keep thy soul, and therefore thy life both inwardly and outwardly; he will keep thy going out and coming in, *i.e.*, all thy business and intercourse of life . . . . . everywhere and at all times; and that from this time forth even for ever.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

*Verse* 6.—"*The sun shall not smite thee by day,*" etc. A promise made with allusion unto, and application of that care which God had over his people, when he brought them out of Egypt through the wilderness, when he guarded them from the heat of the sun by a cloud by day, and from the cold and moistness of the night and moon by a pillar of fire by night.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 6.—"*Nor the moon by night.*"

> The moon, the governess of floods,
> Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
> That rheumatic diseases do abound.
>
> —*William Shakespeare* (1564—1616), *in* "*The Midsummer Night's Dream.*"

*Verse* 6.—Joseph Hart in one of his hymns speaks of some who "travel much by night." To such this promise is precious.—*Biblical Treasury.*

*Verse* 6.—"*Nor the moon by night.*" The effect of the moonlight on the eyes in this country is singularly injurious. . . . The moon here really strikes and affects the sight, when you sleep exposed to it, much more than the sun, a fact of which I had a very unpleasant proof one night, and took care to guard against it afterwards; indeed, the sight of a person who should sleep with his face exposed at night would soon be utterly impaired or destroyed.—*John Carne, in* "*Letters from the East,*" 1826.

*Verse* 6.—"*Nor the moon by night.*" In the cloudless skies of the East, where the moon shines with such exceeding clearness, its effects upon the human frame have been found most injurious. The inhabitants of these countries are most careful in taking precautionary measures before exposing themselves to its influence. Sleeping much in the open air, they are careful to cover well their heads and faces. It has been proved beyond a doubt that the moon smites as well as the sun, causing blindness for a time, and even distortion of the features.

Sailors are well aware of this fact; and a naval officer relates that he has often, when sailing between the tropics, seen the commanders of vessels waken up young men who have fallen asleep in the moonlight. Indeed, he witnessed more than once the effects of a moonstroke, when the mouth was drawn on one side and the sight injured for a time. He was of opinion that, with long exposure, the mind might become seriously affected. It is supposed that patients suffering under fever and other illnesses are affected by this planet, and the natives of India constantly affirm that they will either get better or worse, according to her changes.—*C. W., in* "*The Biblical Treasury.*"

*Verse* 7.—"*The* LORD *shall preserve thee from all evil.*" Lawyers, when they are drawing up important documents, frequently conclude with some general terms to meet any emergency which may possibly occur. They do this on the principle, that what is not in may be supposed to be intentionally left out. In order to guard against this inference, they are not content with inserting a number of particular cases; they conclude with a general statement, which includes everything, whether expressed or not. A similar formula is inserted here. It is of great importance, that the feet of travellers

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be kept from sliding, as they pursue their journey. It is of great importance, that they be preserved from heat by day, and from cold by night. But other dangers await them, from which they require protection; and lest the suspicion be entertained, that no provision is made for these being surmounted, they are all introduced in the saving and comprehensive clause. No matter what may be their character, no matter from what quarter they may appear, no matter when they may come, and no matter how long they may continue, the declaration covers them all. Divine grace changes the nature of everything it handles, and transforms everything it touches into gold. Afflictions are overruled for good; and the virtues of the Christian life are developed with unusual lustre. "*The* LORD *shall preserve thee from all evil.*"—*N. McMichael.*

*Verse* 7.—"*The* LORD *shall preserve thee from all evil,*" etc. It is an absolute promise, there are no conditions annexed; it honours God for us simply to believe it, and rest on the Lord for the performance of it. As we view it, what have we to fear? The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, his word is immutable. Jesus preserves body and soul, he is the Saviour of the body as well as of the soul.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

*Verses* 7, 8.—The threefold expression, "shall keep *thee* . . . *thy soul* . . . *thy going out* and *thy coming in*," marks the completeness of the protection vouchsafed, extending to all that the man is and that he does.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

*Verses* 7, 8.—It is of importance to mark the reason why the prophet repeats so often what he had so briefly and in one word expressed with sufficient plainness. Such repetition seems at first sight superfluous; but when we consider how difficult it is to correct our distrust, it will be easily perceived that he does not improperly dwell upon the commendation of the divine providence. How few are to be found who yield to God the honour of being a "*keeper*," in order to their being thence assured of their safety, and led to call upon him in the midst of their perils! On the contrary, even when we seem to have largely experienced what this protection of God implies, we yet instantly tremble at the noise of a leaf falling from a tree, as if God had quite forgotten us. Being then entangled in so many unholy misgivings, and so much inclined to distrust, we are taught from the passage that if a sentence couched in a few words does not suffice us, we should gather together whatever may be found throughout the whole Scriptures concerning the providence of God, until this doctrine—"That God always keeps watch for us"—is deeply rooted in our hearts; so that, depending upon his guardianship alone, we may bid adieu to all the vain confidences of the world.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 8.—"*The* LORD *shall preserve.*" The word *shamar* imports a most tender preservation; from it comes *shemuroth*, signifying the eyelids, because they are the keepers of the eye, as the Lord is called in the verse preceding —*shomer Israel*, "*the keeper of Israel.*" If the lids of the eye open, it is to let the eye see; if they close, it is to let it rest, at least to defend it; all their motion is for the good of the eye. O, what a comfort is here! The Lord calleth his Church "the apple of his eye": "he that toucheth you, touches the apple of mine eye." The Church is the apple of God's eye, and the Lord is the covering of it. O, how well are they kept whom "the keeper of Israel" keepeth! The Lord was a buckler to Abraham, none of his enemies could harm him; for his buckler covered him thoroughly. The Lord was a hedge unto Job; Satan himself confessed he could not get through it, howsoever many a time he assayed it, to have done evil unto Job. . . . . .

But seeing this same promise of preservation was made before (for from the third verse to the end of the Psalm, six sundry times, is the word of keeping or preserving repeated), why is it now made over again? Not without cause; for this doubling and redoubling serves, first, for a remedy

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of our ignorance. Men, if they be in any good estate, are ready to "sacrifice to their own net," or "to cause their mouth to kiss their own hand," as if their own hand had helped them: thus to impute their "deliverance" to their "calf," and therefore often is this resounded, "The Lord," "The Lord." Is thy estate advanced? The Lord hath done it. Hast thou been preserved from desperate dangers? Look up to the Lord, thy help is from on high, and to him let the praise be returned. Secondly, it is for a remedy of our natural diffidence: the word of the Lord in itself is as sure when it is spoken, as when it is sworn; as sure spoken once, as when it is oftener repeated; yet is not the Lord content to speak only, but to swear also; nor to speak once, but often, one and the selfsame thing. The reason is showed us by the apostle, that hereby he may "declare to the heirs of promise the stability of his counsel." Heb. vi.; Gen. xxi. 32. As Joseph spake of Pharaoh his vision, "It was doubled, because the thing is established by God, and God hasteth to perform it"; so is it with every word of the Lord, when it is repeated; it is because it is established, and God hastens to perform it.—*From a Sermon by Bishop Cowper, entitled "His Majesties Comming in,"* 1623.

*Verse* 8.—"*The* LORD *shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in.*" All actions being comprehended under one of these two sorts, "*going out*" to more public, and "*coming in*" to more private affairs; or again, "*going out*" to begin, and "*coming in*" at the end of the work. But by this expression may here perhaps be more particularly signified that God would protect David, even to the end of his days, whenever he marched out with his armies, or brought them home.—*Thomas Fenton.*

*Verse* 8.—"*From this time forth, and even for evermore.*" He has not led me so tenderly thus far to forsake me at the very gate of heaven.—*Adoniram Judson.*

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## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

*Verse* 1.—The window opened towards Jerusalem. I. The hills we look to. II. The help we look for. III. The eyes we look with.

*Verse* 1.—"*Whence cometh my help?*" A grave question; for, I. I need it, greatly, in varied forms, constantly, and now. II. In few directions can I look for it, for men are feeble, changeable, hostile, etc. III. I must look above. To Providence, to Grace, to my God.

*Verse* 2.—The Creator the creature's helper.

*Verse* 2.—I. God is his people's "help." II. He helps them in proportion as they feel their need of his help. III. His help is never in vain. "My help cometh." not from the earth merely, or the skies, but "from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Is. xl. 26—31.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 3 (*first clause*).—The preservation of saintly character the care of the Creator.

*Verse* 3.—Comfort for a pilgrim along the *mauvais pas* of life. We have a Guide omniscient, omnipotent, unsleeping, unchanging.

*Verse* 3.—"*He that keepeth thee will not slumber.*" I. The Lord's care is personal in its objects. The keeper of Israel is the keeper of the individual. God deals with us individually. 1. This is implied in his care of the church, which is composed of individuals. 2. It is involved in the nature of our religion, which is a personal thing. 3. It is affirmed in Scripture. Examples; promises; experiences. "He loved *me*," etc., etc. 4. It is confirmed by experience. II. The Lord's care is unwearied in its exercise: "Will not slumber." 1. He is never unacquainted with our condition. 2. He is never indifferent to it. 3. He is never weary of helping us. We sometimes think he sleeps, but this is our folly.—*Frederick J. Benskin, of Reading,* 1882.

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*Verse* 4.—I. The suspicion—that God sleeps. II. The denial. III. The implied opposite—he is ever on the watch to bless.

*Verse* 4.—He keepeth Israel, 1. As his chief treasure, most watchfully. 2. As his dearest spouse, most tenderly. 3. As the apple of his eye, most charily and warily.—*Daniel Featley*, 1582—1645.

*Verse* 5.—The Lord Keeper. I. Blessings included in this title. II. Necessities which demand it. III. Offices which imply it,—Shepherd, King, Husband, Father, etc. IV. Conduct suggested by it.

*Verse* 5 (*last clause*).—God as near us, and as indivisible from us as our shadow.

*Verse* 5.—"*The* LORD *is thy keeper*," not angels. I. He is *able* to keep thee. He has infinite knowledge, power, etc. II. He has *engaged* to keep thee. III. He *has* kept thee. IV. He *will* keep thee. In his love; in his covenant, etc., as his sheep, his children, his treasures, as the apple of his eye, etc.—*F. J. B.*

*Verse* 5.—"*The* LORD *is thy keeper*." I. Wakeful: "Will not slumber." II. Universal: "Thy going out and thy coming in:" "From all evil." III. Perpetual: "Day:" "night:" "evermore." IV. Special: "Thy:" "Israel."—*W. J.*

*Verse* 6.—The highest powers, under God, prevented from hurting believers, and even made to serve them.

*Verse* 6.—Our Horoscope. I. Superstitious fears removed. II. Sacred assurances supplied.

*Verse* 7.—I. Personal agency of God in providence. II. Personal regard of providence to the favoured individual. III. Special care over the centre of the personality—"thy soul."

*Verse* 8.—Who? "The Lord." What? "Shall preserve thee." When? "Going out and coming in from this time forth." How long? "For evermore." What then? "I will lift up mine eyes."

*Verse* 8.—I. Changing—going out and coming in. II. Unchanging—"The Lord shall preserve," etc.

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## WORKS ON THE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIRST PSALM.

In "*Letters on Spiritual Subjects* . . . . by SAMUEL EYLES PIERCE . . . London: 1862," Vol. I., pp. 359—370, there are "Some Observations on the Hundred and Twenty-first Psalm."

In "*Meditations on Twenty select Psalms*, by Sir ANTHONY COPE, Chamberlain to Queen Katherine Parr. Reprinted from the edition of 1547; . . . By WILLIAM H. COPE, M.A. 1848," there is a Meditation on this psalm.

**See also List of Works upon the Gradual Psalms, page 403.**

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# PSALM CXXII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—*This brief but spirited Psalm is entitled* "A Song of Degrees of David," *and thus we are informed as to its author, and the occasion for which it was designed: David wrote it for the people to sing at the time of their goings up to the holy feasts at Jerusalem. It comes third in the series, and appears to be suitable to be sung when the people had entered the gates, and their feet stood within the city. It was most natural that they should sing of Jerusalem itself, and invoke peace and prosperity upon the Holy City, for it was the centre of their worship, and the place where the Lord revealed himself above the mercy-seat. Possibly the city was not all built in David's day, but he wrote under the spirit of prophecy, and spoke of it as it would be in the age of Solomon; a poet has license to speak of things, not only as they are, but as they will be when they come to their perfection. Jerusalem, or the Habitation of Peace, is used as the key-word of this psalm, wherein we have in the original many happy allusions to the salem, or peace, which they implored upon Jerusalem. When they stood within the triple walls, all things around the pilgrims helped to explain the words which they sang within her ramparts of strength. One voice led the psalm with its personal* "*I*," *but ten thousand brethren and companions united with the first musician and swelled the chorus of the strain.*

## EXPOSITION.

I WAS glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

2 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

3 Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:

4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.

5 For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

7 Peace be within thy walls, *and* prosperity within thy palaces.

8 For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace *be* within thee.

9 Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.

1. "*I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the* LORD." Good children are pleased to go home, and glad to hear their brothers and sisters call them thither. David's heart was in the worship of God, and he was delighted when he found others inviting him to go where his desires had already gone: it helps the ardour of the most ardent to hear others inviting them to a holy duty. The word was not "go," but "let us go"; hence the ear of the Psalmist found a double joy in it. He was glad *for the sake of others:* glad that they wished to go themselves, glad that they had the courage and liberality to invite others. He knew that it would do them good; nothing better can happen to men and their friends than to love the place where God's honour dwelleth. What a glorious day shall that be when many people shall go and say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." But David was glad *for his own sake:* he loved the invitation to the holy place, he delighted in being called

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to go to worship in company, and, moreover, he rejoiced that good people thought enough of him to extend their invitation to him. Some men would have been offended, and would have said, "Mind your own business. Let my religion alone;" but not so King David, though he had more dignity than any of us, and less need to be reminded of his duty. He was not teased but pleased by being pressed to attend holy services. He was glad to go into the house of the Lord, glad to go in holy company, glad to find good men and women willing to have him in their society. He may have been sad before, but this happy suggestion cheered him up: he pricked up his ears, as the proverb puts it, at the very mention of his Father's house. Is it so with us? Are we glad when others invite us to public worship, or to church fellowship? Then we shall be glad when the spirits above shall call us to the house of the Lord not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

"Hark! they whisper: angels say,
Sister spirit, come away."

If we are glad to be called by others to our Father's house, how much more glad shall we be actually to go there. We love our Lord, and therefore we love his house, and pangs of strong desire are upon us that we may soon reach the eternal abode of his glory. An aged saint, when dying, cheered herself with this evidence of grace, for she cried, "I have loved the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth," and therefore she begged that she might join the holy congregation of those who for ever behold the King in his beauty. Our gladness at the bare thought of being in God's house is detective as to our character, and prophetic of our being one day happy in the Father's house on high. What a sweet Sabbath psalm is this! In prospect of the Lord's day, and all its hallowed associations, our soul rejoices. How well, also, may it refer to the church! We are happy when we see numerous bands ready to unite themselves with the people of God. The pastor is specially glad when many come forward and ask of him assistance in entering into fellowship with the church. No language is more cheering to him than the humble request, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."

2. "*Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem;*" or, better, "our feet are standing." The words imply present and joyous standing within the walls of the city of peace; or perhaps the pilgrims felt so sure of getting there that they antedated the joy, and spoke as if they were already there, though they were as yet only on the road. If we are within the church we may well triumph in the fact. While our feet are standing in Jerusalem our lips may well be singing. Outside the gates all is danger, and one day all will be destruction; but within the gates all is safety, seclusion, serenity, salvation, and glory. The gates are opened that we may pass in, and they are only shut that our enemies may not follow us. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, and so do we when we are enclosed within them. What a choice favour, to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem! Why are *we* so greatly favoured? Many feet are running the downward road, or kicking against the pricks, or held by snares, or sliding to an awful fall; but our feet, through grace divine, are "standing"—an honourable posture, "within thy gates, O Jerusalem"—an honourable position, and there shall they stand for ever—an honourable future.

3. "*Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.*" David saw in vision the city built; no more a waste, or a mere collection of tents, or a city upon paper, commenced but not completed. God's mercy to the Israelitish nation allowed of peace and plenty, sufficient for the uprise and perfecting of its capital: that city flourished in happy times, even as the church is only built up when all the people of God are prospering. Thanks be to God, Jerusalem is builded: the Lord by his glorious appearing has built up Zion. Furthermore, it is not erected as a set of booths, or a conglomeration of

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hovels, but as a city, substantial, architectural, designed, arranged, and defended. The church is a permanent and important institution, founded on a rock, builded with art, and arranged with wisdom. The city of God had this peculiarity about it, that it was not a long, straggling street, or a city of magnificent distances (as some mere skeleton places have been styled), but the allotted space was filled, the buildings were a solid block, a massive unity: this struck the dwellers in villages, and conveyed to them the idea of close neighbourhood, sure standing, and strong defence. No quarter could be surprised and sacked while other portions of the town were unaware of the assault: the ramparts surrounded every part of the metropolis, which was singularly one and indivisible. There was no flaw in this diamond of the world, this pearl of cities. In a church one of the most delightful conditions is the compactness of unity: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." A church should be one in creed and one in heart, one in testimony and one in service, one in aspiration and one in sympathy. They greatly injure our Jerusalem who would build dividing walls within her; she needs compacting, not dividing. There is no joy in going up to a church which is rent with internal dissension: the gladness of holy men is aroused by the adhesiveness of love, the unity of life; it would be their sadness if they saw the church to be a house divided against itself. Some bodies of Christians appear to be periodically blown to fragments, and no gracious man is glad to be in the way when the explosions take place: thither the tribes do not go up, for strife and contention are not attractive forces.

4. "*Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the* LORD." When there is unity within there will be gatherings from without: the tribes go up to a compact centre. Note that Israel was one people, but yet it was in a sense divided by the mere surface distinction of tribes; and this may be a lesson to us that all Christendom is essentially one, though from various causes we are divided into tribes. Let us as much as possible sink the tribal individuality in the national unity, so that the church may be many waves, but one sea; many branches, but one tree; many members, but one body. Observe that the tribes were all of them the Lord's; whether Judah or Benjamin, Manasseh or Ephraim, they were all the Lord's. Oh that all the regiments of the Christian army may be all and equally the Lord's own, alike chosen, redeemed, accepted, and upheld by Jehovah. "*Unto the testimony of Israel.*" They went up to the holy city to hear and to bear testimony. Everything in the temple was a testimony unto the Lord, and the annual journeys of the tribes to the hallowed shrine partook of the same testifying character, for these journeys were Israel's open avowal that Jehovah was their God, and that he was the one only living and true God. When we assemble on the Sabbath a large part of our business is giving out and receiving testimony: we are God's witnesses; all the tribes of the one church of Jesus Christ bear witness unto the Lord. "*To give thanks unto the name of the* LORD." Another part of our delightful duty is to praise the Lord. Sacred praise is a chief design of the assembling of ourselves together. All Israel had been fed by the fruit of the field, and they went up to give thanks unto the name of their great Husbandman: we, too, have countless mercies, and it becomes us unitedly in our solemn gatherings to magnify the name of our loving Lord. Testimony should be mingled with thanks, and thanks with testimony, for in combination they bless both God and man, and tend to spread themselves over the hearts of our companions; who, seeing our joyful gratitude, are the more inclined to hearken to our witness-bearing.

Here, then, was part of the cause of the gladness of the pious Israelite when he had an invitation to join the caravan which was going to Zion: he would there meet with representatives of all the clans of his nation, and aid them in the double object of their holy assemblies, namely, testimony and thanksgiving. The very anticipation of such delightful engagements filled him to overflowing with sacred gladness.

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5. "*For there are set thrones of judgment.*" If discontented with the petty judgments of their village lords, the people could bring their hard matters to the royal seat, and the beloved King would be sure to decide aright; for the judgment-thrones were "*The thrones of the house of David.*" We who come to the church and its public worship are charmed to come to the throne of God, and to the throne of the reigning Saviour.

"He reigns! Ye saints, exalt your strains:
Your God is King, your Father reigns:
And he is at the Father's side,
The Man of love, the Crucified."

To a true saint the throne is never more amiable than in its judicial capacity; righteous men love judgment, and are glad that right will be rewarded and iniquity will be punished. To see God reigning in the Son of David and evermore avenging the just cause is a thing which is good for weeping eyes, and cheering for disconsolate hearts. They sang of old as they went towards the throne, and so do we. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." The throne of judgment is not removed, but firmly "*set*," and there it shall remain till the work of justice is accomplished, and truth and right are set on the throne with their King. Happy people to be under so glorious a rule.

6. "*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*" Peace was her name, pray that her condition may verify her title. Abode of Peace, peace be to thee. Here was a most sufficient reason for rejoicing at the thought of going up to the house of the Lord, since that sacred shrine stood in the centre of an area of peace: well might Israel pray that such peace should be continued. In a church peace is to be desired, expected, promoted, and enjoyed. If we may not say "Peace at any price," yet we may certainly cry "Peace at the highest price." Those who are daily fluttered by rude alarms are charmed to reach their nest in a holy fellowship, and abide in it. In a church one of the main ingredients of success is internal peace: strife, suspicion, party-spirit, division,—these are deadly things. Those who break the peace of the church deserve to suffer, and those who sustain it win a great blessing. Peace in the church should be our daily prayer, and in so praying we shall bring down peace upon ourselves; for the Psalmist goes on to say, "*They shall prosper that love thee,*" or, perhaps we may read it as a prayer, "May they have peace that love thee." Whether the passage be regarded as a promise or as a prayer matters not, for prayer pleads the promise, and the promise is the ground of prayer. Prosperity of soul is already enjoyed by those who take a deep interest in the church and cause of God: they are men of peace, and find peace in their holy endeavours: God's people pray for them, and God himself delights in them. Prosperity of worldly condition often comes to the lovers of the church if they are able to bear it: many a time the house of Obed-edom is blessed because of the ark of the Lord. Because the Egyptian midwives feared the Lord, therefore the Lord made them houses. No man shall ever be a permanent loser by the house of the Lord: in peace of heart alone, if in nothing else, we find recompense enough for all that we can do in promoting the interests of Zion.

7. "*Peace be within thy walls.*" See how the poet personifies the church, and speaks to it: his heart is with Zion, and therefore his conversation runs in that direction. A second time is the sweet favour of peace earnestly sought after: "There is none like it, give it me." Walls were needed to keep out the foe, but it was asked of the Lord that those walls might prove sufficient for her security. May the munitions of rock so securely defend the city of God that no intruder may ever enter within her enclosure. May her ramparts repose in safety. Three walls environed her, and thus she had a trinity of security. "*And prosperity within thy palaces,*" or "Repose within thy palaces." Peace is prosperity; there can be no prosperity which is not

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based on peace, nor can there long be peace if prosperity be gone, for decline of grace breeds decay of love. We wish for the church rest from internal dissension and external assault: war is not her element, but we read of old, "Then had the churches rest; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." The bird of Paradise is not a stormy petrel: her element is not the hurricane of debate, but the calm of communion.

Observe that our Jerusalem is a city of palaces: kings dwell within her walls, and God himself is there. The smallest church is worthy of higher honour than the greatest confederacies of nobles. The order of the New Jerusalem is of more repute in heaven than the knights of the Golden Fleece. For the sake of all the saintly spirits which inhabit the city of God we may well entreat for her the boons of lasting peace and abounding prosperity.

8. "*For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.*" It is to the advantage of all Israel that there should be peace in Jerusalem. It is for the good of every Christian, yea, of every man, that there should be peace and prosperity in the church. Here our humanity and our common philanthropy assist our religious prayer. By a flourishing church our children, our neighbours, our fellow-countrymen are likely to be blest. Moreover, we cannot but pray for a cause with which our dearest relatives and choicest friends are associated: if they labour for it, we must and will pray for it. Here peace is mentioned for the third time. Are not these frequent threes some hint of the Trinity? It would be hard to believe that the triple form of so many parts of the Old Testament is merely accidental. At least, the repetition of the desire displays the writer's high valuation of the blessing mentioned; he would not again and again have invoked peace had he not perceived its extreme desirableness.

9. "*Because of the house of the* LORD *our God I will seek thy good.*" He prays for Jerusalem because of Zion. How the church salts and savours all around it. The presence of Jehovah, our God, endears to us every place wherein he reveals his glory. Well may we seek her good within whose walls there dwells God who alone is good. We are to live for God's cause, and to be ready to die for it. First we love it (verse 6) and then we labour for it, as in this passage: we see its good, and then seek its good. If we can do nothing else we can intercede for it. Our covenant relation to Jehovah as our God binds us to pray for his people,—they are "the house of the Lord our God." If we honour our God we desire the prosperity of the church which he has chosen for his indwelling.

Thus is the poet glad of an invitation to join with others in the Lord's service. He goes with them and rejoices, and then he turns his delight into devotion, and intercedes for the city of the great King. O church of the living God, we hail thine assemblies, and on bended knee we pray that thou mayest have peace and felicity. May our Jehovah so send it. Amen.

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## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

*Whole Psalm.*—Foxe, in his "Acts and Monuments," relates of Wolfgang Schuch, the martyr, of Lothareng in Germany, that upon hearing the sentence that he was to be burned pronounced upon him, he began to sing the hundred and twenty-second psalm, *Lætus sum in his quæ dicta sunt mihi*, etc.

*Whole Psalm.*—Perhaps the true text of this psalm is found in its designation, "*A Song of Degrees.*" *Every verse* is treated as *a degree* of advancement in the spiritual life, beginning with "*help*" from the eternal

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"*hills*" for the trials of time, closing with preservation "*for evermore.*"—*Henry Melvill.*

*Verse* 1.—"*I was glad when they said unto me,*" etc. Gregory Nazianzen writeth that his father being a heathen, and often besought by his wife to become a Christian, had this verse suggested unto him in a dream, and was much wrought upon thereby.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 1.—"*I was glad when they said,*" etc. These words seem to be very simple, and to contain in them no great matter; but if you look into the same with spiritual eyes, there appeareth a wonderful great majesty in them; which because our Papists cannot see, they do so coldly and negligently pray, read, and sing this psalm and others, that a man would think there were no tale so foolish or vain, which they would not either recite or hear with more courage and delight. These words, therefore, must be unfolded and laid before the eyes of the faithful: for when he saith, "*We will go into the house of the Lord,*" what notable thing can we see in these words, if we only behold the stones, timber, gold, and other ornaments of the material temple? But to go into the house of the Lord signifieth another manner of thing; namely, to come together where we may have God present with us, hear his word, call upon his holy name, and receive help and succour in our necessity. Therefore it is a false definition of the temple which the Papists make; that it is a house built with stones and timber to the honour of God. What this temple is they themselves know not; for the temple of Solomon was not therefore beautiful because it was adorned with gold and silver, and other precious ornaments; but the true beauty of the temple was, because in that place the people heard the word of the Lord, called upon his name, found him merciful, giving peace and remission of sins, etc. This is rightly to behold the temple, and not as the visored bishops behold their idolatrous temple when they consecrate it.—*Martin Luther.*

*Verse* 1.—"*I was glad when they said unto me, Let us* (*or, We will*) *go,*" etc. You have here, I. David's delight. II. The object or reason of it. I. In the object there are circumstances enough to raise his joy to the highest note. First, *A company*, either a tribe, or many of, or all, the people: "They said unto me." So, in another place, he speaketh of "walking to the house of God in company:" Ps. lv. 14. A glorious sight, a representation of heaven itself, of all the angels crying aloud, the Seraphim to the Cherubim, and the Cherubim echoing back again to the Seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." Secondly, *Their resolution* to serve the Lord: *Dixerunt*, "They said it:" and "to say" in Scripture is to resolve. "We will go," is either a lie, or a resolution. Thirdly, *Their agreement* and joint consent: "We," This is as a circle, and taketh in all within its compass. If there be any dissenting, unwilling person, he is not within this circumference, he is none of the "We." A Turk, a Jew, and a Christian cannot say, "We will serve the Lord;" and the schismatic or separatist shutteth himself out of the house of the Lord. "We" is a bond of peace, keepeth us at unity, and maketh many as one. Fourthly, *Their cheerfulness* and alacrity. They speak like men going out of a dungeon into the light, as those who had been long absent from what they loved, and were now approaching unto it, and in fair hope to enjoy what they most earnestly desired: "We will go;" we will make haste, and delay no longer. *Ipsa festinatio tarda est;* "Speed itself is but slow paced." We cannot be there soon enough. Fifthly and lastly: *The place where they will serve God:* not one of their own choosing; not the groves, or hills, or high places; no oratory which pride, or malice, or faction had erected; but a place appointed and set apart by God himself. *Servient Domino in domo sua:* "They will serve the Lord in his own house." They said unto me, "We will go into the house of the Lord."—*Anthony Farindon.*



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*Verse* 1.—"*Let us go into the house of the Lord.*" "*Let us go,*" spoken by one hundred men in any city to those over whom they have influence, would raise a monster meeting . . . . But who among those who thus single out the working classes, have gone to them and said, "Let us go—let us go together into the house of the Lord"? The religious adviser, standing at a distance from the multitude, has advised, and warned, and pleaded, saying, "Go, or you will not escape perdition;" "Why don't you go?" The Christian visitor has likewise used this kind of influence; but how few have taken the workingman by the hand, and said, "Let us go together"? You can *bring* multitudes whom you never can send. Many who would never come alone would come most willingly under the shadow of your company. Then, brethren, to your non-attending neighbour say, "Let us go"; to reluctant members of your own family say, "Let us go"; to those who once went to the house of God in your company, but who have backslidden from worship say, "Let us go"; to all whose ear, and mind, and heart, you can command for such a purpose say, "Let us go—let us go together into the house of the Lord."—*Samuel Martin* (1817—1878), *in a Sermon entitled* "*Gladness in the Prospect of Public Worship.*"

*Verse* 1.—"*I was glad when they said unto me,*" etc. Such in kind, but far greater in degree, is the gladness, which the pious soul experiences when she is called hence; when descending angels say unto her, Thy labour and sorrow are at an end, and the hour of thy enlargement is come; put off immortality and misery at once; quit thy house of bondage, and the land of thy captivity; fly forth, and "let us go together into the house of the Lord, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—*George Horne.*

*Verses* 1, 2.—This is a mutual exhortation. The members of the church invite each other: "Let us go into the house of the Lord." It is not enough to say, Go you to church, and I shall stop at home. That will never do. We must invite by example as well as by precept. Mark the plural forms: "Let *us* go into the house of God. *Our* feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." We are to speak as Moses did to Hobab, his brother-in-law, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." The same duty is binding upon us, with regard to those who make no profession of religion, and whose feet never stand in the house of God. Zechariah, in an animated picture of the future glories of the church, describes the new-born zeal of the converts as taking this direction. They cannot but speak of what they have seen and heard, and others must share in their joy. "And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also."—*N. M'Michael.*

*Verse* 2.—With what a blessed hope do they, while they are here in this mortal life, lift up their affections, desires, and thoughts to the heavenly country, because they are able to say with the prophet, "*Our feet stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.*" Like those who haste to any place, they are said to be always thinking as if they were already there, and in reality they are there in mind though not in body, and are able greatly to comfort others. What wonder, if a righteous man, wishing to comfort others, should thus speak, "*Our feet stand,*" *i.e.*, our desires, our contemplations, shall be fixed and stable in thy courts, O Jerusalem; *i.e.*, in the mansions of the heavenly kingdom, so that our conversation shall be in heaven, and all our works be done in relation to eternal life, for which we long with greatest intensity of desire. This is not that Jerusalem which killed the prophets and stoned those that were sent unto her, but that where the perfect vision of peace reigns.—*Paulus Palanterius.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.*" Dr. Clarke, in his travels, speaking of the companies that were travelling from the East to Jerusalem, represents the procession as being very long, and, after climbing

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over the extended and heavy ranges of hills that bounded the way, some of the foremost at length reached the top of the last hill, and, stretching up their hands in gestures of joy, cried out, "The Holy City! The Holy City!" —and fell down and worshipped; while those who were behind pressed forward to see. So the dying Christian, when he gets on the last summit of life, and stretches his vision to catch a glimpse of the heavenly city, may cry out of its glories, and incite those who are behind to press forward to the sight.—*Edward Payson*, 1783—1827.

*Verse* 2.—"*O Jerusalem.*" The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as he approached, and now he fills the whole hemisphere; pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun; exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering, with unutterable wonder, why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm.—*Edward Payson's dying experience.*

*Verse* 2.—"*O Jerusalem;*"—

> Lo, towered Jerusalem salutes the eyes!
> A thousand pointing fingers tell the tale;
> "Jerusalem!" a thousand voices cry,
> "All hail, Jerusalem!" hill, down, and dale
> Catch the glad sounds, and shout "Jerusalem, all hail."
>
> —*Torquato Tasso*, 1544—1595.

*Verse* 3.—"*Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.*" The deep depressions which secured the city must have always acted as its natural defence. But they also determined its natural boundaries. The city, wherever else it spread, could never overleap the valley of the Kedron or of Hinnom; and those two fosses, so to speak, became accordingly, as in the analogous case of the ancient towns of Etruria, the Necropolis of Jerusalem. . . . The compression between these valleys probably occasioned the words of the Psalmist: "*Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity in itself.*" It is an expression not inapplicable even to the modern city, as seen from the east. But it was still more appropriate to the original city, if, as seems probable, the valley of Tyropœon formed in earlier times a fosse within a fosse, shutting in Zion and Moriah into one compact mass not more than half a mile in breadth.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley* (1815—1881), *in* "*Sinai and Palestine.*"

*Verse* 3.—"*Jerusalem.*" It matters not how wicked or degraded a place may have been in former times, when it is sanctified to the use and service of God it becomes honourable. Jerusalem was formerly Jebus—a place where the Jebusites committed their abominations, and where were all the miseries of those who hasten after another God. But now, since it is devoted to God's service, it is a city—"*compact together,*" "*the joy of the whole earth.*"—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 3.—"*Compact.*" Jerusalem was compactly built; every rood of ground, every foot of frontage, was valuable; house was joined to house; those who had gardens had them beyond the city walls, among the "paradises" of the valley of Jehoshaphat.—*Samuel Cox.*

*Verse* 3.—"*Compact together.*" Methinks Philadelphia, the name of one of the seven golden candlesticks (Rev. i.), is a very proper fitting name for a church, which signifies brotherly love; and every congregation ought to be in a good sense the family of love. Breaches and divisions, distractions

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and heart-burnings, may happen in other kingdoms which are without God in the world and strangers to the covenant of grace; yet let Jerusalem, the Church of God, be always like a city which is at unity within itself.—*John Pigot*, 1648.

*Verse* 3.—"*As a city that is compact together.*" Can we say of the great universal church throughout the world, what the pilgrims said of Jerusalem when gazing on its splendour, from the surrounding hills, that it is built "*as a city that is compact together*"? A stately capital, throned on a base of rock, its spacious streets and noble edifices, beautiful in themselves, deriving added splendour from the taste and regularity of their arrangement, appears, both to the scoffing unbeliever and grieving Christian, a singularly inappropriate emblem of the divided and distracted, the jarring and warring church. If the church may be compared to a city in respect of magnitude, it is one in which every one builds on his own plan; in which the various masses which should embellish and support each other are studiously kept apart, suggesting less the idea of a compact and united capital than of detached and isolated forts, held by persons who keep themselves jealously aloof from each other, save when mutual hatred and heart-burnings bring them together for conflict. There is some truth in the picture; alas! for the proud, foolish builders who give occasion to it, and who, instead of praying for and seeking the peace of Jerusalem, rejoice in exhibiting, perpetuating, and fomenting strife! But, blessed be God, there is yet more of falsehood than truth in it. With all our divisions the Christian Jerusalem *is compact in itself together*. What occupies the hearts and tongues of the myriads of worshippers that assemble themselves weekly in the sanctuaries of our beloved land, and of the millions that assemble beyond the Atlantic billows, but the one glorious gospel of the grace of God? Leave out from the computation the priest with his mass-book, the cold Socinian without his Saviour, and the deluded orthodox professor who holds the truth in unrighteousness; still yonder and yonder and yonder, whatever their name, their place, or their outward worship, are myriads of true hearts, beating with one pulse, gazing on one hope, possessed of one conviction, and praying and pressing forward to one blessed home.—*Robert Nisbet.*

*Verses* 3, 4.—He commendeth Jerusalem, the figure of the church of God and of the corporation of his people, First, as a city for a community. Secondly, as the place of God's public assemblies for religious worship. Thirdly, as the place of public judicature, for governing the Lord's people under David, the type of Christ. Whence learn, 1. The church of God is not without cause compared to a city, and especially to Jerusalem, because of the union, concord, community of laws, mutual commodities, and conjunction of strength which should be among God's people: "*Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.*" 2. That which commendeth a place most of anything is the erecting of the Lord's banner of love in it, and making it a place for his people to meet together for his worship: "*Jerusalem is a city whither the tribes go up.*" 3. Whatsoever civil distinction God's children have among themselves, and howsoever they dwell scattered in several places of the earth, yet as they are the Lord's people, they should entertain a communion and conjunction among themselves as members of one universal church, as the signification of the peoples meeting thrice in the year at Jerusalem did reach: "*Whither the tribes did go up, the tribes of the Lord.*" 4. As the tribes, so all particular churches, how far soever scattered, have one Lord, one covenant, one law and Scripture, signified by the tribes going up to "*the testimony of Israel,*" or to the Ark of the Covenant or testimony where the whole ordinances of God were to be exercised. 5. The end of the ordinances of God, of holy covenanting and communion, and joining in public worship, is to acknowledge the grace and goodness of God, and to glorify him; for the tribes did go up "*to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.*"—*David Dickson.*

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*Verse* 4.—"*The tribes*" are "the tribes of the Lord," as being the keepers of his commandments.—*H. T. Armfield.*

*Verse* 4.—"*Unto the testimony of Israel, and to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.*" These two mean nothing else than that in Jerusalem was the appointed place where the word was to be taught and prayer offered. But these ought to be written in golden letters, because David says nothing about the other services, but only of these two. He does not say that the Temple was divinely appointed, that there the victims should be sacrificed; that there incense should be offered; that oblations and sacrifices should be brought; that each one should by his gifts show his gratitude. He says nothing about these things, although only in the Temple were they commanded to be done. He makes mention only of prayer and of thanksgiving.—*Martin Luther.*

*Verse* 4.—"*The testimony of Israel.*" The object which is represented in the psalm as having power to attract all hearts, and command the ready attendance of the tribes, is "*the testimony of Israel,*" the revelation, in other words, which God made to that people of his character, feelings, and purposes, as most holy, yet ready to forgive, a just God and the Saviour. This discovery of the nature of that great Being before whom all must appear, is justly regarded as a ground of joy.—*Robert Nisbet.*

*Verses* 4, 5.—Observe what a goodly sight it was to see "*the testimony of Israel*" and the "*thrones of judgment*" such near neighbours; and they are good neighbours, which may greatly befriend one another. Let "*the testimony of Israel*" direct the "*thrones of judgment,*" and the "*thrones of judgment*" protect "*the testimony of Israel.*"—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 5.—"*Thrones of judgment.*" On a throne of ivory, brought from Africa or India, the throne of many an Arabian legend, the kings of Judah were solemnly seated on the day of their accession. From its lofty seat, and under that high gateway, Solomon and his successors after him delivered their solemn judgments. That "porch" or "gate of justice," still kept alive the likeness of the old patriarchal custom of sitting in judgment at the gate; exactly as the Gate of Justice still recalls it to us at Granada, and the Sublime Porte—"the Lofty Gate" at Constantinople. He sate on the back of a golden bull, its head turned over its shoulder, probably the ox or bull of Ephraim; under his feet, on each side of the steps, were six golden lions, probably the lions of Judah. This was "the seat of judgment." This was the throne of the house of David.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, in "Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church."*

*Verse* 5.—It was a worthy commendation that David uttered in the praise of Jerusalem when he said, "*There is the seat for judgment;*" the which appointing of that seat for judgment was an argument that they loved justice. And first, the place wherein it was set assureth us hereof, for it was set in the gate, where-through men might have passage to and from the judgment seat. Secondly, the manner of framing the seat in the gate, namely, that the judges of force must sit with their faces towards the rising of the sun, in token that then judgment should be as pure from corruption, as the sun was clear in his chiefest brightness. Oh happy house of David, whose seat was set so conveniently, whose causes were heard so carefully, and matters judged so justly!—*Henry Smith*, 1560—1591.

*Verse* 6.—"*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*" By praying for Jerusalem's peace is meant such serene times wherein the people of God might enjoy his pure worship without disturbance. The Church has always had her vicissitudes, sometimes fair, and sometimes foul weather; but her winter commonly longer than her summer; yea, at the same time that the Sun of peace brings day to one part of it, another is wrapped up in the night of persecution. Universal peace over all the churches is a great rarity.—*William Gurnall.*

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*Verse* 6.—"*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*" When the Wesleyan Methodists opened a chapel at Painswick, near his own meeting, the late excellent Cornelius Winter prayed three times publicly the preceding Sabbath for their encouragement and success. When Mr. Hoskins, of Bristol, the Independent minister of Castle-Green, opened a meeting in Temple Street; what did the incomparable Easterbrooke, the Vicar of the parish? The morning it was opened, he was almost the first that entered it. He seated himself near the pulpit. When the service was over, he met the preacher at the foot of the stairs, and shaking him with both hands, said aloud: "I thank you cordially, my dear brother, for coming to my help—here is room enough for us both; and work enough for us both; and much more than we can both accomplish: and I hope the Lord will bless our co-operation in this good cause."—*William Jay.*

*Verse* 6.—"*Pray* (with this princely prophet) *for the peace of Jerusalem.*" I wish I could express the incomparable sweetness of this little *hemistichium.* I guess, the Holy Ghost was pleased to let the Psalmist play the poet here: the psalms are holy poetry. The original words have such elegancy here, as (I think) all the Scripture cannot parallel this verse. It is in English unexpressible. For the point in hand only, he bids us pray for the peace of *Jerusalem. Peace* denominates *Jerusalem*, 'tis the etymon of the word, it means *the vision of peace.* David by that term most sweetly alludes to the name of the city, yet conceals his wit; which could have been made more open: he said, שַׁאֲלוּ שְׁלוֹם שָׁלֵם, "*Pray for the peace of Salem.*" For so it was called too, called first so, called still so (Ps. lxxvi.:) "At Salem is his tabernacle." That word merely sounds *peace:* God would have his Church the house of peace; and his temple there David might not build because he was a man of war; but Solomon his son, who had his name of peace, must build it. Christ, whose the church is, she his spouse, would not be born in Julius Cæsar's reign; he was a warrior too: but in Augustus's days, who reigned in peace. And this may be a reason too, if you please, why David bids pray but for peace only, an earthly blessing. That word most fitted his art here, and sounded best. But under that word, by poetical *synecdoche*, lie couched all heavenly blessings.—*Richard Clerke*,—1634.

*Verse* 6.—"*Pray*," etc. Our praying for the church giveth us a share in all the church's prayers; we have a venture in every ship of prayer that maketh a voyage for heaven, if our hearts be willing to pray for the church; and if not, we have no share in it.

Let no man flatter himself: they that *pray not* for the church of God *love not* the church of God. "*Let them prosper that love thee*"; that is, that *pray* for thee, the one is the counterpart of the other. If we do not love it, we will not pray for it; and if we do not pray for it, we do not love it. Yea, if we pray not for the church, *we lose* our share in the prayers of the church. You will say that man hath a great estate that hath a part in every ship at sea; and yet to have an adventure in all the prayers that are made to heaven is better than all the world. All the church's prayers are for all the living members of it, viz.—the blessings will be to them, for a man to have a venture in every ship of prayer of all the churches throughout all the world. I would not (for my part) leave my share in it for all the world; and that man hath no share in it that will not afford a prayer for the church.—*John Stoughton*, 1640.

*Verse* 6.—"*They shall prosper that love thee.*" The word "*prosper*" conveys an idea which is not in the original. The Hebrew word means *to be secure, tranquil, at rest*, spoken especially of one who enjoys quiet prosperity: Job iii. 26; xii. 6. The essential idea is that of quietness or rest; and the meaning here is, that those who love Zion *will* have peace; or, that the tendency of that love is to produce peace. See Rom. v. 1. The prayer was for "peace"; the thought in connexion with that was naturally that those who loved Zion *would* have peace. It is indeed true, in general, that

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they who love Zion, or who serve God, *will* "prosper"; but that is not the truth taught here. The idea is that they will have *peace*:—peace with God; peace in their own consciences; peace in the prospect of death and of the future world; peace amidst the storms and tempests of life; peace in death, in the grave, and for ever.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 6.—"*They shall prosper that love thee.*" Seeing they prosper that love and bear affection to Jerusalem, let men learn to show good will unto Christ's church, though as yet they be no ripe scholars themselves in Christ's school: though they be not grown to perfection let them express a good affection. A good will and inclination, where strength yet faileth, is accepted, and a ready disposition is not rejected: though thou be not yet of the saints, yet love the saints. If thou likest and lovest that thou wouldst be, thou must be that hereafter which yet thou art not. The little bird before she flieth fluttereth with her wings in the nest; the child creepeth before he goeth: so religion beginneth with affection, and devotion proceedeth from desire. A man must first love that he would be, before he can be that which he loveth. It is a good sign when a man affecteth that which he expecteth, and doth favour that which he would more fully favour. He that loveth Sion shall prosper: he that loveth virtue shall increase and prosper in it. The day of small things shall not be despised (Zech. iv. 10), neither shall the smoking flax be quenched (Matt. xii. 20); but the smoke shall bring forth fire, and fire shall break forth into a flame.—*Andrew Willett* (1562—1621), *in* "*Certaine Fruitfvll Meditations vpon the* 122. *Psalme.*"

*Verse* 6.—"*They shall prosper that love thee.*" The reverse is also true. "None ever took a stone out of the Temple, but the dust did fly into his eyes."—*Jewish Proverb.*

*Verses* 6—9.—In this cordial and even impassioned invocation, it is curious to find one of those puns, or plays on words, which are characteristic of Hebrew poetry. The leading words of the strophe are "*peace*" and "*prosperity.*" Now the Hebrew word for "*peace*" is *shâlōm*, and the Hebrew word for "*prosperity*" is *shalvah*, while the Hebrew form of "Jerusalem," which means "City of Peace," is Yeru-*shalaim*. So that, in effect, the poet wishes *shâlōm* and *shalvah* on *shalaim*—"peace" and "prosperity" on "the City of Peace." Such an use of words may not strike us as indicating any very subtle or profound sense of humour, or any remarkable artistic skill. But we must always remember that it is always difficult for one race to appreciate the humour, or wit, of another race. We must also remember that this art of playing on words and the sound of words—an art of which we are growing weary—was very novel and surprising to men not surfeited with it as we are, and who were themselves for the most part quite incapable of the simplest dexterities of speech.—*Samuel Cox.*

*Verse* 7.—"*Peace be within thy walls.*" The Church is a war-town, and a walled-town, which is situated among enemies, and may not trust them who are without, but must be upon its keeping, as the type thereof, Jerusalem, with her walls and towers, did shadow forth.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 7.—"*Within thy walls.*" Or, *To thy outward wall.* Josephus tells us (Book V.) that there were at Jerusalem three ranges or rows of walls. The sense here is, Let no enemy approach so much as to thy out-works to disturb thee.—*Thomas Fenton.*

*Verse* 8.—"*For my brethren and companions' sakes.*" Because they dwell there; or, because they go up there to worship; or, because they love thee, and find their happiness in thee; or, because they are unconverted, and all my hope of their salvation is to be derived from thee,—from the church, from the influence of religion.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 8.—"*My brethren.*" On another occasion, an elderly native, formerly a cannibal, addressing the Church members, said, "Brethren!" and,

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pausing for a moment, continued, "Ah! that is a new name; we did not know the true meaning of that word in our heathenism. It is the 'Evangelia a Jesu' that has taught us the meaning of 'brethren.'"—*William Gill, in "Gems from the Coral Islands,"* 1869.

*Verse* 9.—"*Because of the house of the Lord.*" The city that was the scene of so immense assemblies had necessarily a peculiar character of its own. It existed for them, it lived by them. There were priests needed for the conduct of the worship, twenty-four courses of them and 20,000 men. There were Levites, their servants, in immense numbers, needed to watch, maintain, clean the temple—to do the menial and ministering work necessary to its elaborate service and stupendous acts of worship. There were scribes needed for the interpretation of the law, men skilled in the Scriptures and tradition, with names like Gamaliel, so famed for wisdom as to draw young men like Saul from distant Tarsus, or Apollos from rich Alexandria. There were synagogues, 480 of them at least, where the rabbis read and the people heard the word which God had in past times spoken unto the fathers by the prophets. The city was indeed in a sense the religion of Israel, incorporated and localized, and the man who loved the one turned daily his face toward the other, saying, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jahveh."—*A. M. Fairbairn, in "Studies in the Life of Christ,"* 1881.

*Verse* 9.—"*I will seek thy good.*" It is not a cold wish; it is not a careless, loose seeking after it, that is the phrase in my text—"*I will seek thy good.*" It is not a careless, loose seeking after it, almost as indifferently as a woman seeks after a pin which she has dropped; no, no; effort is implied. "*I will seek*"; I will throw my energies into it; my powers, my faculties, my property, my time, my influence, my connections, my family, my house, all that I have under my command shall, as far as I have power to command, and as far as God gives me ability to turn them to such a use, be employed in an effort to promote the interests of Zion.—*Joseph Irons,* 1786—1852.

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## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

*Whole Psalm.*—Observe, I. The joy with which they were to go up to Jerusalem: verses 1, 2. II. The great esteem they were to have of Jerusalem: verses 3—5. III. The great concern they were to have for Jerusalem, and the prayers they were to put up for its welfare.—*M. Henry.*

*Verse* 1.—I. David was glad to go to the house of the Lord. It was the house of the Lord, therefore he desired to go. He preferred it to his own house. II. He was glad when others said to him, "Let us go." The distance may be great, the weather may be rough, still, "Let us go." III. He was glad to say it to others, "Let us go," and to persuade others to accompany him.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 1.—I. Joy in prospect of religious worship. 1. Because of the instruction we receive. 2. Because of the exercises in which we engage. 3. Because of the society in which we mingle. 4. Because of the sacred interests we promote. II. Joy in the invitation to religious worship. 1. Because it shows others are interested in the service of God. 2. Because it shows their interest in us. 3. Because it furthers the interests of Zion.—*F. J. B.*

*Verse* 1.—Gladness of God's house. Are you "glad when," etc.? Why glad? I. That I have a house of the Lord to which I may go. II. That any feel enough interest in me to say, "Let us go," etc. III. That I am able to go to God's house. IV. That I am disposed to go.—*J. G. Butler, in "The Preacher's Monthly,"* 1882.

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*Verse* 1.—"*I was glad,*" etc. So says, I. *The devout worshipper*, who is glad to be invited *to God's earthly house.* It is his home, his school, his hospital, his bank. II. *The adhesive Christian, who is glad to be invited to God's spiritual house.* Church is builded together, etc. There would he find a settled rest. Has no sympathies with religious gipsies, or no-church people. III. *The dying saint, who is glad to be invited to God's heavenly house.* Simeon—Stephen—Peter—Paul.—*W. J.*

*Verse* 1.—1. The duty of attending the services of God's house. 2. The duty of exciting one another to go. 3. The benefit of being thus excited.—*F. J. B.*

*Verse* 2.—Here is, I. Personal attendance: "*My* feet shall stand," etc. II. Personal security: "My feet shall *stand.*" III. Personal followship: "O Jerusalem."—*G. R.*

*Verse* 2.—The inside of the church. The honour, privilege, joy, and fellowship of standing there.

*Verse* 3.—I. A type of the New Jerusalem. 1. As chosen by God. 2. As founded upon a rock. 3. As taken from an enemy. II. A type of its prosperity: "Builded as a city." III. A type of its perfection: "Compact together."—*G. R.*

*Verse* 3.—The unity of the church. 1. Implied in all covenant dealings. 2. Suggested by all Scriptural metaphors. 3. Prayed for by our Lord. 4. Promoted by the gifts of the Spirit. 5. To be maintained by us all.

*Verses* 3, 4.—The united church the growing church.

*Verse* 4.—I. The duty of public worship. 1. In one place: "*Whither* the tribes go up." 2. In one company, though of many tribes: "Whither the *tribes* go up." II. The design. 1. For instruction: "Unto the testimony of Israel." 2. For praise: "To give thanks unto the name of the Lord."—*G. R.*

*Verse* 5.—I. There are thrones of judgment in the sanctuary. Men are judged there. 1. By the law. 2. By their own consciences. 3. By the gospel. II. There are thrones of grace: "Of the house of David." 1. Of David's Son in the hearts of his people. 2. Of his people in David's Son.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 6.—I. The prayer. 1. "For Jerusalem": not for ourselves merely, or for the world; but for the church. For the babes in grace; for the young men, and for the fathers. For the pastors, with the deacons and elders. 2. For the "peace" of Jerusalem. Inward peace and outward peace. II. The promise. 1. To whom given: "They that love thee." 2. The promise itself: "They shall prosper"—individually and collectively. Or, I. Love to Jerusalem is the effect of true piety. II. Prayer for Jerusalem is the effect of that love. III. The peace of Jerusalem is the effect of that prayer; and, IV. The prosperity of Jerusalem is the effect of that peace.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 6.—God has connected giving and receiving, scattering and increasing, sowing and reaping, praying and prospering. I. What we must do if we would prosper—"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." 1. Comprehensively: "Peace"—spiritual, social, ecclesiastical, national. 2. Supremely: "Prefer Jerusalem above," etc. 3. Practically: "Let peace rule in your hearts." "Seek peace and pursue it." II. What we shall gain if we pray thus—"Prosperity." 1. Temporal prosperity may thus come. God turned again the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. 2. Spiritual prosperity shall thus come. Affairs of soul—holy exercises and services. 3. Numerical prosperity will thus come. "Increased with men as a flock."—*W. J.*

*Verses* 6—9.—I. The blessings desired for the church. 1. Peace. 2. Prosperity. Notice the order and connection of these two. II. The way to secure them. 1. Prayer: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." 2. Delight in the service of God: "I was glad," etc. 3. Practical effort: "I will seek thy good." III. Reasons for seeking them. 1. For our own sake: "They

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shall prosper," etc. 2. For our "companions'" sake. 3. For the sake of the "house of the Lord."—*F. J. B.*

*Verse* 7.—I. Where peace is most desirable: "Within thy walls." Within town walls, within house walls, but principally within temple walls. II. Where prosperity is most desirable. 1. In the closet. 2. In the church. These are the palaces of the Great King; "The ivory palaces whereby they have made thee glad."—*G. R.*

*Verse* 7.—The connection between peace and prosperity.

*Verse* 7.—"*Thy walls.*" 1. Enquire why the church needs walls. 2. Enquire what are the walls of a church. 3. Enquire on which side of them we are.

*Verse* 7.—The church a palace. 1. Intended for the great King. 2. Inhabited by the royal family. 3. Adorned with regal splendour. 4. Guarded by special power. 5. Known as the court of the blessed and only potentate.

*Verses* 8, 9.—Two great principles are here laid down why we should pray for the church,—I. Love to the brethren: "For my brethren and companions' sakes." II. Love to God: "Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good."—*N. M'Michael.*

*Verse* 9.—"*I will seek thy good.*" 1. By prayer for the church. 2. By service in the church. 3. By bringing others to attend. 4. By keeping the peace. 5. By living so as to commend religion.

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## WORKS ON THE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SECOND PSALM.

In "*Chandler's Life of David,*" vol. ii. pp. 131—4, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

*Ecclesia Triumphans: That is, the Ioy of the English Church, for the Happie Coronation of the most vertuous and pious Prince IAMES by the grace of God King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland. . . . With a briefe Exposition of the* 122. *Psalme, and fit application to the time.* . . . . The second edition. [By ANDREW WILLETT.] Printed by IOHN LEGAT, Printer to the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, 1614. [Folio. This Exposition is generally to be found bound up with Willett's "Harmonie vpon the First Booke of Samvel."]

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# PSALM CXXIII.

TITLE.—A Song of degrees. *We are climbing. The first step (Ps. cxx.) saw us lamenting our troublesome surroundings, and the next saw us lifting our eyes to the hills and resting in assured security; from this we rose to delight in the house of the Lord; but here we look to the Lord himself, and this is the highest ascent of all by many degrees. The eyes are now looking above the hills, and above Jehovah's footstool on earth, to his throne in the heavens. Let us know it as* "the Psalm of the eyes." *Old authors call it* Oculus Sperans, *or the eye of hope. It is a short psalm, written with singular art, containing one thought, and expressing it in a most engaging manner. Doubtless it would be a favourite song among the people of God. It has been conjectured that this brief song, or rather sigh, may have first been heard in the days of Nehemiah, or under the persecutions of Antiochus. It may be so, but there is no evidence of it; it seems to us quite as probable that afflicted ones in all periods after David's time found this psalm ready to their hand. If it appears to describe days remote from David, it is all the more evident that the Psalmist was also a prophet, and sang what he saw in vision.*

## EXPOSITION.

UNTO thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of their masters, *and* as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes *wait* upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

4 Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, *and* with the contempt of the proud.

1. "*Unto thee lift I up mine eyes.*" It is good to have some one to look up to. The Psalmist looked so high that he could look no higher. Not to the hills, but to the God of the hills he looked. He believed in a personal God, and knew nothing of that modern pantheism which is nothing more than atheism wearing a figleaf. The uplifted eyes naturally and instinctively represent the state of heart which fixes desire, hope, confidence, and expectation upon the Lord. God is everywhere, and yet it is most natural to think of him as being above us, in that glory-land which lies beyond the skies. "*O thou that dwellest in the heavens,*" just sets forth the unsophisticated idea of a child of God in distress: God is, God is in heaven, God resides in one place, and God is evermore the same, therefore will I look to him. When we cannot look to any helper on a level with us, it is greatly wise to look above us; in fact, if we have a thousand helpers, our eyes should still be toward the Lord. The higher the Lord is the better for our faith, since that height represents power, glory, and excellence, and these will be all engaged on our behalf. We ought to be very thankful for spiritual eyes; the blind men of this world, however much of human learning they may possess, cannot behold our God, for in heavenly matters they are devoid of sight. Yet we must use our eyes with resolution, for they will not go upward to the Lord of themselves, but they incline to look downward, or inward, or anywhere but to the Lord: let it be our firm resolve that the heavenward glance shall not be lacking. If we cannot see God, at least we

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will look towards him. God is in heaven as a king in his palace; he is there revealed, adored, and glorified: thence he looks down on the world and sends succours to his saints as their needs demand; hence we look up, even when our sorrow is so great that we can do no more. It is a blessed condescension on God's part that he permits us to lift up our eyes to his glorious high throne; yea, more, that he invites and even commands us so to do. When we are looking to the Lord in hope, it is well to tell him so in prayer: the Psalmist uses his voice as well as his eye. We need not speak in prayer; a glance of the eye will do it all; for—

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near."

Still, it is helpful to the heart to use the tongue, and we do well to address ourselves in words and sentences to the God who heareth his people. It is no small joy that our God is always at home: he is not on a journey, like Baal, but he dwells in the heavens. Let us think no hour of the day inopportune for waiting upon the Lord; no watch of the night too dark for us to look to him.

2. "*Behold*"—for it is worthy of regard among men, and O that the Majesty of heaven would also note it, and speedily send the mercy which our waiting spirits seek. See, O Lord, how we look to thee, and in thy mercy look on us. This *Behold* has, however, a call to us to observe and consider. Whenever saints of God have waited upon the Lord their example has been worthy of earnest consideration. Sanctification is a miracle of grace; therefore let us behold it. For God to have wrought in men the spirit of service is a great marvel, and as such let all men turn aside and see this great sight. "*As the eyes of servants* (or slaves) *look unto the hand of their masters.*" They stand at the end of the room with their hands folded watching their lord's movements. Orientals speak less than we do, and prefer to direct their slaves by movements of their hands; hence, the domestic must fix his eyes on his master, or he might miss a sign, and so fail to obey it: even so, the sanctified man lifts his eyes unto God, and endeavours to learn the divine will from every one of the signs which the Lord is pleased to use. Creation, providence, grace; these are all motions of Jehovah's hand, and from each of them a portion of our duty is to be learned; therefore should we carefully study them, to discover the divine will. "*And as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress;*" this second comparison may be used because Eastern women are even more thorough than the men in the training of their servants. It is usually thought that women issue more commands, and are more sensitive of disobedience, than the sterner sex. Among the Roman matrons female slaves had a sorry time of it, and no doubt it was the same among the generality of Eastern ladies. "*Even so our eyes wait upon the* LORD *our God.*" Believers desire to be attentive to each and all of the directions of the Lord; even those which concern apparently little things are not little to us, for we know that even for idle words we shall be called to account, and we are anxious to give in that account with joy, and not with grief. True saints, like obedient servants, look to the Lord their God *reverentially:* they have a holy awe and inward fear of the great and glorious One. They watch, *obediently*, doing his commandments, guided by his eye. Their constant gaze is fixed *attentively* on all that comes from the Most High; they give earnest heed, and fear lest they should let anything slip through inadvertence or drowsiness. They look *continuously*, for there never is a time when they are off duty; at all times they delight to serve in all things. Upon the Lord they fix their eyes *expectantly*, looking for supply, succour, and safety from his hands, waiting that he may have mercy upon them. To him they look

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*singly*, they have no other confidence, and they learn to look *submissively*, waiting patiently for the Lord, seeking both in activity and suffering to glorify his name. When they are smitten with the rod they turn their eyes *imploringly* to the hand which chastens, hoping that mercy will soon abate the rigour of the affliction. There is much more in the figure than we can display in this brief comment; perhaps it will be most profitable to suggest the question—Are we thus trained to service? Though we are sons, have we learned the full obedience of servants? Have we surrendered self, and bowed our will before the heavenly Majesty? Do we desire in all things to be at the Lord's disposal? If so, happy are we. Though we are made joint-heirs with Christ, yet for the present we differ little from servants, and may be well content to take them for our model.

Observe the covenant name, "*Jehovah our God*": it is sweet to wait upon a covenant God. Because of that covenant he will show mercy to us; but we may have to wait for it. "*Until that he have mercy upon us:*" God hath his time and season, and we must wait *until* it cometh. For the trial of our faith our blessed Lord may for awhile delay, but in the end the vision will be fulfilled. Mercy is that which we need, that which we look for, that which our Lord will manifest to us. Even those who look to the Lord, with that holy look which is here described, still need mercy, and as they cannot claim it by right they wait for it till sovereign grace chooses to vouchsafe it. Blessed are those servants whom their Master shall find so doing. Waiting upon the Lord is a posture suitable both for earth and heaven: it is, indeed, in every place the right and fitting condition for a servant of the Lord. Nor may we leave the posture so long as we are by grace dwellers in the realm of mercy. It is a great mercy to be enabled to wait for mercy.

3. "*Have mercy upon us, O* LORD, *have mercy upon us.*" He hangs upon the word "mercy," and embodies it in a vehement prayer: the very word seems to hold him, and he harps upon it. It is well for us to pray about everything, and turn everthing into prayer; and especially when we are reminded of a great necessity we should catch at it as a keynote, and pitch our tune to it. The reduplication of the prayer before us is meant to express the eagerness of the Psalmist's spirit and his urgent need: what he needed speedily he begs for importunately. Note that he has left the first person singular for the plural. All the saints need mercy; they all seek it; they shall all have it, therefore we pray—"have mercy upon *us.*" A slave when corrected looks to his master's hand that the punishment may cease, and even so we look to the Lord for mercy, and entreat for it with all our hearts. Our contemptuous opponents will have no mercy upon us; let us not ask it at their hands, but turn to the God of mercy, and seek his aid alone.

"*For we are exceedingly filled with contempt,*" and this is an acid which eats into the soul. Observe the emphatic words. *Contempt* is bitterness, wormwood mingled with gall; he that feels it may well cry for mercy to his God. *Filled* with contempt, as if the bitter wine had been poured in till it was up to the brim. This had become the chief thought of their minds, the peculiar sorrow of their hearts. Excluding all other feelings, a sense of scorn monopolized the soul and made it unutterably wretched. Another word is added adverbially—*exceedingly* filled. Filled even to running over, as if pressed down and then heaped up. A little contempt they could bear, but now they were satiated with it, and weary of it. Do we wonder at the threefold mention of mercy when this master evil was in the ascendant? Nothing is more wounding, embittering, festering than disdain. When our companions make little of us we are far too apt to make little of ourselves and of the consolations prepared for us. Oh to be filled with communion, and then contempt will run off from us, and never be able to fill us with its biting vinegar.

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4. "*Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease.*" Knowing no troubles of their own, the easy ones grow cruel and deride the people of the Lord. Having the godly already in secret contempt, they show it by openly scorning them. Note those who do this: they are not the poor, the humble, the troubled, but those who have a merry life of it, and are self-content. They are in easy circumstances; they are easy in heart through a deadened conscience, and so they easily come to mock at holiness: they are easy from needing nothing, and from having no severe toil exacted from them; they are easy as to any anxiety to improve, for their conceit of themselves is boundless. Such men take things easily, and therefore they scorn the holy carefulness of those who watch the hand of the Lord. They say, Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice? and then they turn round with a contemptuous look and sneer at those who fear the Lord. Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion; their contempt of the godly shall hasten and increase their misery. The injurious effect of freedom from affliction is singularly evident here. Place a man perfectly at ease and he derides the suffering godly, and becomes himself proud in heart and conduct. "*And with the contempt of the proud.*" The proud think so much of themselves that they must needs think all the less of those who are better than themselves. Pride is both contemptible and contemptuous. The contempt of the great ones of the earth is often peculiarly acrid: some of them, like a well-known statesman, are "masters of gibes and flouts and sneers," and never do they seem so much at home in their acrimony as when a servant of the Lord is the victim of their venom. It is easy enough to write upon this subject, but to be selected as the target of contempt is quite another matter. Great hearts have been broken and brave spirits have been withered beneath the accursed power of falsehood, and the horrible blight of contempt. For our comfort we may remember that our divine Lord was despised and rejected of men, yet he ceased not from his perfect service till he was exalted to dwell in the heavens. Let us bear our share of this evil which still rages under the sun, and let us firmly believe that the contempt of the ungodly shall turn to our honour in the world to come: even now it serves as a certificate that we are not of the world, for if we were of the world the world would love us as its own.

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## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

*Whole Psalm.*—This psalm (as ye see) is but short, and therefore a very fit example to show the force of prayer not to consist in many words, but in fervency of spirit. For great and weighty matters may be comprised in a few words, if they proceed from the spirit and the unspeakable groanings of the heart, especially when our necessity is such as will not suffer any long prayer. Every prayer is long enough if it be fervent and proceed from a heart that understandeth the necessity of the saints.—*Martin Luther.*

*Whole Psalm.*—The change of performers in this psalm is very evident; the pronoun in the first distich is in the first person *singular*, in the rest of psalm the first *plural* is used.—*Stephen Street.*

*Whole Psalm.*—This psalm has one distinction which is to be found in "scarcely any other piece in the Old Testament." In the Hebrew it has many rhymes. But these rhymes are purely accidental. They result simply from the fact that many words are used in it with the same inflexions, and therefore with the same or similar terminations. Regularly recurring and intentional rhymes are not a characteristic of Hebrew poetry, any more than they were of Greek or Latin poetry.—*Samuel Cox.*

*Verse* 1.—"*Unto thee lift I up mine eyes.*" He who previously lifted his

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eyes unto the hills, now hath raised his heart's eyes to the Lord himself.—*The Venerable Bede* (672 -735), *in Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse* 1.—"*Unto thee lift I up mine eyes,*" etc. This is the sigh of the pilgrim who ascendeth and loveth, and ascendeth because he loveth. He is ascending from earth to heaven, and while he is ascending, unto whom shall he lift his eyes, but unto him that dwelleth in heaven? We ascend to heaven each time we think of God. In that ascent lies all goodness: if we would repent, we must look not on ourselves, but on him; if we would be humble, we must look not on ourselves, but on him; if we would truly love, we must look not on ourselves, but on him who dwelleth in the heavens. If we would have him turn his eyes from our sins, we must turn our eyes unto his mercy and truth.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

*Verse* 1.—"*Unto thee lift I up mine eyes.*" Praying by the glances of the eye rather than by words; mine afflictions having swollen my heart too big for my mouth.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 1.—"*Unto* THEE *do* I *lift up mine eyes.*" You feel the greatness of the contrast these words imply. Earth and heaven, dust and deity; the poor, weeping, sinful children of mortality, the holy, ever-blessed, eternal God: how wide is the interval of separation between them! But over the awful chasm, broader than ocean though it be, love and wisdom in the person of Jesus Christ, have thrown a passage, by which the most sinful may repair unterrified to his presence, and find the shame and the fears of guilt exchanged for the peace of forgiveness and the hope that is full of immortality.—*Robert Nisbet.*

*Verse* 1.—There are many testimonies in *the lifting up of the eyes to heaven.* 1. It is the testimony of a *believing*, humble heart. *Infidelity* will never carry a man above the earth. *Pride* can carry a man no higher than the earth either. 2. It is the testimony of an *obedient* heart. A man that lifts up his eye to God, he acknowledgeth thus much,—Lord, I am thy servant. 3. It is the testimony of a *thankful* heart; acknowledging that every good blessing, every perfect gift, is from the hand of God. 4. It is the testimony of a *heavenly* heart. He that lifts up his eyes to heaven acknowledgeth that he is weary of the earth; his heart is not there; his hope and desire is above. 5. It is the testimony of a *devout* heart: there is no part of the body besides the tongue that is so great an agent in prayer as the eye.—*Condensed from Richard Holdsworth.*

*Verse* 1.—"*O thou that dwellest in the heavens.*" "*That sittest.*" The Lord is here contemplated as enthroned in heaven, where he administers the affairs of the Universe, executes judgment, and hears prayer.—*James G. Murphy.*

*Verses* 1, 2.—The lifting up the eyes, implies faith and confident persuasion that God is ready and willing to help us. The very lifting up of the bodily eyes towards heaven is an expression of this inward trust: so David in effect saith, From thee, Lord, I expect relief, and the fulfilling of thy promises. So that there is faith in it, that faith which is the evidence of things not seen. How great soever the darkness of our calamities be, though the clouds of present troubles thicken about us, and hide the Lord's care and loving-kindness from us, yet faith must look through all to his power and constancy of truth and love. The eye of faith is a clear, piercing, eagle eye: Moses "endured, as seeing him who is invisible:" Heb. xi. 27. . . . . Faith seeth things afar off in the promises (Heb. xi. 13), at a greater distance than the eye of nature can reach to. Take it either for the eye of the body, or the mind, faith will draw comfort not only from that which is invisible, but also from that which is future as well as invisible; its supports lie in the other world, and in things which are yet to come.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verses* 1, 2.—In the first strophe the poet places himself before us as standing in the presence of the Majesty of Heaven, with his eyes fixed on the hand of God, absorbed in watchful expectation of some sign or gesture, however slight, which may indicate the divine will. He is like a slave

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standing silent but alert, in the presence of the Oriental "lord," with hands folded on his breast, and eyes fixed on his master, seeking to read, and to anticipate, if possible, his every wish. He is like a maiden in attendance on her mistress, anxiously striving to see her mind in her looks, to discover and administer to her moods and wants. The grave, reserved Orientals, as we know, seldom speak to their attendants, at least on public occasions. They intimate their wishes and commands by a wave of the hand, by a glance of the eye, by slight movements and gestures which might escape notice, were they not watched for with eager attention. Their slaves "*hang* upon their faces;" they "*fasten* their eyes" on the eyes of their master; they watch and obey every turn of his hand, every movement of his finger. Thus the Psalmist conceives of himself as waiting on God, looking to him alone, watching for the faintest signal, bent on catching and obeying it.—*Samuel Cox.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Behold.*" An ordinary word, but here it hath an extraordinary position. Ordinarily it is a term of *attention*, used for the awakening of men, to stir up their admiration and audience; but here it is a word not only prefixed for the exciting of men, but of God himself. David is speaking to God in his meditations. "Behold," saith he. As we take it with respect to God, so it is a *precatory* particle: he beseecheth God to look *down* upon him, while he looks *up* unto God: Look on us, as we look to thee; "*Behold, Lord, as the eyes of servants,*" etc. If we take it as it hath respect to *man*, so it is an *exemplary* particle, to stir them up to do the like. "*Behold*" what we do, and do likewise; let your eyes be like ours. "Behold, as the eyes of servants are to the hand of their masters, so are our eyes to the Lord our God." Let yours have the same fixing. So it is a word that draws all eyes after it to imitation.—*Richard Holdsworth.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Behold as the eyes of servants look,*" etc. For direction, defence, maintenance, mercy in time of correction, help when the service is over-hard, etc., "*so do our eyes wait upon the Lord our God,*" viz., for direction and benediction.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Eyes of servants unto the hand,*" etc. Our eyes ought to be to the hand of the Lord our God:—First, that we may admire his works. Secondly, that we may show that our service is pleasant to us; and to show our dependence on such a benign, mighty, and bountiful hand. Thirdly, that we may evince to him our love, and devoted willingness to do all things which he shall command by the slightest movement of a finger. Fourthly, that from him we may receive food, and all things necessary for sustenance. Fifthly, that he may be a defence for us against the enemies that molest us, either by smiting them with the sword, or by shooting of arrows; or by repelling others by the movement of a finger; or, at least, by covering us with the shield of his good-will. Sixthly and lastly, that, moved by mercy, he would cease from chastisement.—*Condensed from Le Blanc.*

*Verse* 2.—"*As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters,*" etc. A traveller says, "I have seen a fine illustration of this passage in a gentleman's house at Damascus. The people of the East do not speak so much or so quick as those in the West, and a sign of the hand is frequently the only instructions given to the servants in waiting. As soon as we were introduced and seated on the divan, a wave of the master's hand indicated that sherbet was to be served. Another wave brought coffee and pipes; another brought sweetmeats. At another signal dinner was made ready. The attendants watched their master's eye and hand, to know his will and do it instantly." Such is the attention with which we ought to wait upon the Lord, anxious to fulfil his holy pleasure,—our great desire being, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" An equally pointed and more homely illustration may be seen any day, on our own river Thames, or in any of our large seaport towns, where the call-boy watches attentively the

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hand of the captain of the boat, and conveys his will to the engine-men.—"*The Sunday at Home.*"

*Verse* 2.—"*As the eyes of slaves,*" watching anxiously the least movement, the smallest sign of their master's will. The image expresses complete and absolute dependence. Savary (in his *Letters on Egypt*, p. 135), says, "The slaves stand silent at the bottom of the rooms with their hands crossed over their breasts. *With their eyes fixed upon their master* they seek to anticipate every one of his wishes." . . . . In the psalm the eye directed to the hand of God is the *oculus sperans*, the eye which waits, and hopes, and is patient, looking only to him and none other for help.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 2.—"*As the eyes of servants,*" etc. The true explanation, I should apprehend, is this: As a slave, ordered by a master or mistress to be chastised for a fault, turns his or her imploring eyes to that superior, till that motion of the hand appears that puts an end to the bitterness that is felt; so our eyes are up to thee, our God, till thy hand shall give the signal for putting an end to our sorrows: for our enemies, O Lord, we are sensible, are only executing thy orders, and chastening us according to thy pleasure. —*Thomas Harmer.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Servants.*" Note how humbly the faithful think of themselves in the sight of God. They are called and chosen to this dignity, to be the heirs and children of God, and are exalted above the angels, and yet, notwithstanding, they count themselves no better in God's sight than "*servants.*" They say not here, Behold, like as children look to the hand of their fathers, but "as servants" to the hand of their masters. This is the humility and modesty of the godly, and it is so far off that hereby they lose the dignity of God's children, to the which they are called, that by this means it is made to them more sure and certain.—*Martin Luther.*

*Verse* 2. — From the everyday conduct of domestic servants we should learn our duty Godwards. Not without cause did our Saviour take his parables from common, everyday things, from fields, vines, trees, marriages, etc., that thus we might have everywhere apt reminders.—*Martin Geier.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Servants.*" "*A Maiden.*" Consider that there be two sorts of servants set down here, man-servants and maid-servants; and this is to let us know that both sexes may be confident in God. Not only may men be confident in the power of God, but even women also, who are more frail and feeble. Not only may women mourn to God for wrongs done to them, and have repentance for sin, but they may be confident in God also. And therefore see, in that rehearsal of believers and cloud of witnesses, not only is the faith of men noted and commended by the Spirit of God, but also the faith of women: and among the judges, Deborah, Jael, etc., are commended as worthies, and courageous in God. And the women also in the New Testament are noted for their following of Christ—even when all fled from him, then they followed him. — *From a Sermon by Alexander Henderson*, 1583—1646.

*Verse* 2. — "*Servants.*" "*A maiden.*" We know how shamefully servants were treated in ancient times, and what reproaches must be cast upon them, whilst yet they durst not move a finger to repel the outrage. Being therefore deprived of all means of defending themselves, the only thing which remained for them to do was, what is here stated, to crave the protection of their masters. The same explanation is equally applicable to the case of *handmaids.* Their condition was indeed shameful and degrading; but there is no reason why we should be ashamed of, or offended at, being compared to slaves, provided God is our defender, and takes our lives under his guardianship; God, I say, who purposely disarms us and strips us of all worldly aid, that we may learn to rely upon his grace, and to be contented with it alone. It having been anciently a capital crime for bondmen to carry a sword or any other weapon about them, and as they were exposed to injuries of every description, their masters were wont to defend them with



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so much the more spirit, when anyone causelessly did them violence. Nor can it be doubted that God, when he sees us placing an exclusive dependence upon his protection. and renouncing all confidence in our own resources, will, as our defender, encounter and shield us from all the molestation that shall be offered to us.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse* 2. — "*Hand.*" With the *hand* we demand, we promise, we call, dismiss, threaten, entreat, supplicate, deny, refuse, interrogate, admire, reckon, confess, repent; express fear, express shame, express doubt; we instruct, command, unite, encourage, swear, testify, accuse, condemn, acquit, insult, despise, defy, disdain, flatter, applaud, bless, abase, ridicule, reconcile, recommend, exalt, regale, gladden, complain, afflict, discomfort, discourage, astonish; exclaim, indicate silence, and what not? with a variety and a multiplication that keep pace with the tongue. — *Michael de Montaigne*, 1533—1592.

*Verse* 2.—"*Masters.*" It is said of Mr. George Herbert, that divine poet, that, to satisfy his independency upon all others, and to quicken his diligence in God's service, he used in his ordinary speech, when he made mention of the blessed name of Jesus, to add, "my Master." And, without any doubt, if men were unfeignedly of his mind, their respects would be more to Christ's command, to Christ's will, to Christ's pleasure. — *From Spencer's "Things New and Old."*

*Verse* 2.—"*Our eyes wait.*" Here the Psalmist uses another word: it is the eye *waiting*. What is the reason of the second word? Now he leaves the similitude in the first line; for in the first line it is thus,—"As the eyes of servants *look*, and the eyes of a maiden *look*"; here it is the eye *waits*. There is good reason: to *wait* is more than to *look:* to *wait* is to look constantly, with patience and submission, by subjecting our affections and wills and desires to God's will; that is to *wait*. David in the second part, in the second line, gives a *better* word, he betters his copy. There is the duty of a Christian, to better his example; the eyes of servants *look*, David's eyes shall *wait:* "*So our eyes wait.*" It is true indeed this word is not in the original, therefore you may observe it is in a small letter in your Bibles, to note that it is a word of necessity, added for the supply of the sense, because the Holy Ghost left it not imperfect, but more perfect, that he put not in the verb; because it is left to every man's heart to supply a verb to his own comfort, and a better he cannot than this. And that this word must be added appears by the next words: "*until that he have mercy upon us.*" To look till he have mercy on us is to *wait;* so there is good reason why this word is added. If we look to the thing begged—"*mercy*" — it is so precious that we may *wait* for it. It was "servants" that he mentioned, and it is their duty to *wait* upon their masters; they wait upon their trenchers at meat; they wait when they go to bed and when they rise; they wait in every place. Therefore, because he had mentioned the first word, he takes the proper duty; there is nothing more proper to servants than waiting, and if we are the servants of God we must *wait*. There is good reason in that respect, because it is a word so significant, therefore the Spirit of God varies it; he keeps not exactly to the line, "So do our eyes *look*," but he puts it, "So do our eyes *wait.*"—*Richard Holdsworth.*

*Verse* 3.—"*Have mercy upon us, O* LORD, *have mercy upon us!*" Note how a godly man speaks. He does not say, "*Have mercy upon me, O* LORD *have mercy upon* me! because I am disgraced;" but, "*Have mercy upon us, O* LORD, *for we are filled with contempt!*" The godly man is not so grieved for his own and individual contempt as he is for the general contempt of the good and faithful. There is an accord of the godly, not only in the cross, but also in groanings, and in the invocation of divine grace.— *Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse* 3.—"*For we are exceedingly filled.*" The Hebrew word here used

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means "*to be saturated*"; to have the appetite fully satisfied—as applied to one who is hungry or thirsty. Then it comes to mean to be entirely full, and the idea here is, that as much contempt had been thrown upon them as could be: they could experience no more.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse* 3.—"*We are exceedingly filled with contempt.*" Men of the world regard the Temple Pilgrims and their religion with the quiet smile of disdain, wondering that those who have so much to engage them in a present life should be weak enough to concern themselves about frames and feelings, about an unseen God, and unknown eternity; and this is a trial they find it hard to bear. *Their soul, too, is filled exceedingly with the scorning of those that are at ease.* The prosperous of their neighbours declare that they have found the world a generous and happy scene to all who deserve its gifts. Poverty and sorrow they attribute to unworthiness alone. "Let them exert themselves," is the unfeeling cry; "let them bestir themselves instead of praying, and with them as with us it will soon be well;" and these words of harsh and unfeeling ignorance are like poison to the wounds of the bleeding heart. They have further "*the contempt of the proud*" to mourn; of those who give expression to their fierce disdain by assailing them with words of contumely, and who seek to draw them by reproaches both from peace and from piety. These are still the trials of Zion's worshippers: silent contempt, open misrepresentation, fierce opposition. Religion, their last comfort, is despised; peace, their first desire, is denied. Anxious to devote themselves in the spirit of humble and earnest piety to the duties of their appointed sphere, they find enemies in open outcry and array against them. But God is their refuge, and to him they go.—*Robert Nisbet.*

*Verses* 3, 4.—The second strophe takes up the "have mercy upon us," as it were in echo. It begins with a *Kyrie eleison*, which is confirmed in a *crescendo* manner after the form of steps.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

*Verse* 4.—"*Exceedingly filled*," or perhaps, "*has long been filled.*" (Compare cxx. 6). This expression, together with the earnestness of the repeated prayer, "Be gracious unto us," shows that the "scorn" and "contempt" have long pressed upon the people, and their faith has accordingly been exposed to a severe trial. The more remarkable is the entire absence of anything like impatience in the language of the psalm.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

*Verse* 4.—"*The scorning of those that are at ease.*" When men go on prosperously, they are apt wrongfully to trouble others, and then to shout at them in their misery, and to despise the person and cause of God's people. This is the sure effect of great arrogancy and pride. They think they may do what they please; they have no changes, therefore they fear not God, but put forth their hands against such as be at peace with them (Ps. lv. 19, 20); whilst they go on prosperously and undisturbedly, they cannot abstain from violence and oppression. This is certainly pride, for it is a lifting up of the heart above God and against God and without God. And they do not consider his providence, which alternately lifts up and casts down, that adversity may not be without a cordial, nor prosperity without a curb and bridle. When men sit fast, and are well at ease, they are apt to be insolent and scornful. Riches and worldly greatness make men insolent and despisers of others, and not to care what burdens they impose upon them; they are intrenched within a mass of wealth and power and greatness, and so think none can call them to an account.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 4.—"*Those that are at ease.*" The word always means such as are recklessly at their ease, *the careless ones*, such as those whom Isaiah bids, "rise up, tremble, be troubled;" for "many days and years shall ye be troubled" (ch. xxxii. 9—11). It is that luxury and ease which sensualize

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the soul, and make it dull, stupid, hard-hearted.—*Edward Bouverie Pusey* (1800—), *in* "*The Minor Prophets.*"

*Verse* 4.—"*Those that are at ease,*" who are regardless of the troubles of others, and expect none of their own.—*James G. Murphy.*

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## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

*Whole Psalm.*—We have here, I. The prayer of *dependence*, verse 2. II. The prayer of *apprehension:* "Unto *thee,*" etc. III. The spirit of *obedience:* "As the eyes of servants:" etc. IV. The *patience* of the saints: "*Until* he have mercy upon us."—*R. Nisbet.*

*Whole Psalm.*—Eyes and no eyes. I. EYES. 1. *Upward*, in confidence, in prayer, in thought. 2. "*Unto,*" in reverence, watchfulness, obedience. 3. *Inward*, producing a cry for mercy. II. NO EYES. 1. No sight of the excellence of the godly. 2. No sense of their own danger: "at ease." 3. No humility before God: "proud." 4. No uplifted eyes in hope, prayer, expectation.

*Verse* 1.—*The eyes of faith.* I. Need uplifting. II. See best upward. III. Have always something to see upward. IV. Let us look up, and so turn our eyes from too much introspection and retrospection.

*Verse* 1.—I. The language of Adoration: "Thou that dwellest in the heavens." II. The language of Confession. 1. Of need. 2. Of Helplessness. III. The language of Supplication: "Unto thee," etc. IV. The language of Expectation; as shown in verse 2.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 2.—(Psalm cxxi. 4 with this verse.) Two beholds. I God's watchful eye over us. II. The saint's watchful eye upon God.

*Verse* 2.—"*Our eyes wait upon the Lord our God.*" I. What it is to wait with the eye. II. What peculiar aspect of the Lord suggests such waiting: "Jehovah our God." The covenant God is the trusted God. III. What comes of such waiting—"mercy."

*Verse* 2.—The guiding hand. I. A beckoning hand—to go near. II. A directing hand—to go here and there. III. A quiescent hand—to remain where we are.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 2.—Homely metaphors, or what may be learned from maids and their mistresses.

*Verse* 3 (*first portion*).—The Sinner's Litany. The Saint's Entreaty.

*Verse* 3 (*second portion*).—The world's contempt, the abundance of it, the reason of it, the bitterness of it, the comfort under it.

*Verses* 3, 4.—I. The occasion of the prayer: the contempt of men. This is often the most difficult to bear. 1. Because it is most unreasonable. Why ridicule men for yielding to their own convictions of what is right? 2. Most undeserved. True religion injures no man, but seeks the good of all. 3. Most profane. To reproach the people of God because they are his people is to reproach God himself. II. The subject of the prayer. 1. The prayer: is not for justice, which might be desired, but for mercy. 2. The plea: "For we are," etc. The reproaches of men are an encouragement to look for special help from God. The harp hung upon the willows sends forth its sweetest tones. The less it is in human hands the more freely it is played upon by the Spirit of God.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 4.—"*Those that are at ease.*" I. Explain their state: "at ease." II. Show their ordinary state of mind: "proud." III. Denounce their frequent sin: scorn of the godly. IV. Exhibit their terrible danger.

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# PSALM CXXIV.

TITLE.—A Song of degrees of David. *Of course the superfine critics have pounced upon this title as inaccurate, but we are at liberty to believe as much or as little of their assertions as we may please. They declare that there are certain ornaments of language in this little ode which were unknown in the Davidic period. It may be so; but in their superlative wisdom they have ventured upon so many other questionable statements that we are not bound to receive this dictum. Assuredly the manner of the song is very like to David's, and we are unable to see why he should be excluded from the authorship. Whether it be his composition or no, it breathes the same spirit as that which animates the unchallenged songs of the royal composer.*

DIVISION.—*This short Psalm contains an acknowledgement of favour received by way of special deliverance* (1—5), *then a grateful act of worship in blessing Jehovah* (6, 7), *and, lastly, a declaration of confidence in the Lord for all future time of trial. May our experience lead us to the same conclusion as the saints of David's time. From all confidence in man may we be rescued by a holy reliance upon our God.*

## EXPOSITION.

IF *it had not been* the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say;

2 If *it had not been* the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us:

3 Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us:

4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul:

5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

1. "*If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say.*" The opening sentence is abrupt, and remains a fragment. By such a commencement attention was aroused as well as feeling expressed: and this is ever the way of poetic fire—to break forth in uncontrollable flame. The many words in italics in our authorized version will show the reader that the translators did their best to patch up the passage, which, perhaps, had better have been left in its broken grandeur, and it would then have run thus:—

> "Had it not been Jehovah! He was for us, oh let Israel say!
> Had it not been Jehovah! He who was for us when men rose against us."

The glorious Lord became our ally; he took our part, and entered into treaty with us. If Jehovah were not our protector where should we be? Nothing but his power and wisdom could have guarded us from the cunning and malice of our adversaries; therefore, let all his people say so, and openly give him the honour of his preserving goodness. Here are two "ifs," and yet there is no "if" in the matter. The Lord was on our side, and is still our defender, and will be so from henceforth, even for ever. Let us with holy confidence exult in this joyful fact. We are far too slow in declaring our gratitude, hence the exclamation which should be rendered, "O let Israel say." We murmur without being stirred up to it, but our thanksgiving needs a spur, and it is well when some warm-hearted friend bids us say what we feel. Imagine what would have happened if the Lord had left us, and then see what has happened because he has been faithful to us. Are

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not all the materials of a song spread before us? Let us sing unto the Lord.

2. "*If it had not been the* LORD *who was on our side, when men rose up against us.*" When all men combined, and the whole race of men seemed set upon stamping out the house of Israel, what must have happened if the covenant Lord had not interposed? When they stirred themselves, and combined to make an assault upon our quietude and safety, what should we have done in their rising if the Lord had not also risen? No one who could or would help was near, but the bare arm of the Lord sufficed to preserve his own against all the leagued hosts of adversaries. There is no doubt as to our deliverer, we cannot ascribe our salvation to any second cause, for it would not have been equal to the emergency; nothing less than omnipotence and omniscience could have wrought our rescue. We set every other claimant on one side, and rejoice because the Lord was on our side.

3. "*Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us.*" They were so eager for our destruction that they would have made only one morsel of us, and have swallowed us up alive and whole in a single instant. The fury of the enemies of the church is raised to the highest pitch, nothing will content them but the total annihilation of God's chosen. Their wrath is like a fire which is kindled, and has taken such firm hold upon the fuel that there is no quenching it. Anger is never more fiery than when the people of God are its objects. Sparks become flames, and the furnace is heated seven times hotter when God's elect are to be thrust into the blaze. The cruel world would make a full end of the godly seed were it not that Jehovah bars the way. When the Lord appears, the cruel throats cannot swallow, and the consuming fires cannot destroy. Ah, if it were not Jehovah, if our help came from all the creatures united, there would be no way of escape for us: it is only because the Lord liveth that his people are alive.

4. "*Then the waters had overwhelmed us.*" Rising irresistibly, like the Nile, the flood of opposition would soon have rolled over our heads. Across the mighty waste of waters we should have cast an anxious eye, but looked in vain for escape. The motto of a royal house is, "Tossed about but not submerged": we should have needed an epitaph rather than an epigram, for we should have been driven by the torrent and sunken, never to rise again. "*The stream had gone over our soul.*" The rushing torrent would have drowned our soul, our hope, our life. The figures seem to be the steadily-rising flood, and the hurriedly-rushing stream. Who can stand against two such mighty powers? Everything is destroyed by these unconquerable forces, either by being submerged or swept away. When the world's enmity obtains a vent it both rises and rushes, it rages and rolls along, and spares nothing. In the great water-floods of persecution and affliction who can help but Jehovah? But for him where would we be at this very hour? We have experienced seasons in which the combined forces of earth and hell must have made an end of us had not omnipotent grace interfered for our rescue.

5. "*Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.*" The figure represents the waves as proud, and so they seem to be when they overleap the bulwarks of a frail bark, and threaten every moment to sink her. The opposition of men is usually embittered by a haughty scorn which derides all our godly efforts as mere fanaticism or obstinate ignorance. In all the persecutions of the church a cruel contempt has largely mingled with the oppression, and this is overpowering to the soul. Had not God been with us our disdainful enemies would have made nothing of us, and dashed over us as a mountain torrent sweeps down the side of a hill, driving everything before it. Not only would our goods and possessions have been carried off, but our soul, our courage, our hope would have been borne away by the impetuous assault, and buried beneath the insults of our antagonists. Let us pause

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here, and as we see what might have been, let us adore the guardian power which has kept us in the flood, and yet above the flood. In our hours of dire peril we must have perished had not our Preserver prevailed for our safe keeping.

6 Blessed *be* the LORD, who hath not given us *as* a prey to their teeth.

7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

6. "*Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.*" Leaving the metaphor of a boiling flood, he compares the adversaries of Israel to wild beasts who desired to make the godly their prey. Their teeth are prepared to tear, and they regard the godly as their victims. The Lord is heartily praised for not permitting his servants to be devoured when they were between the jaws of the raging ones. It implies that none can harm us till the Lord permits: we cannot be their prey unless the Lord gives us up to them, and that our loving Lord will never do. Hitherto he has refused permission to any foe to destroy us, blessed be his name. The more imminent the danger the more eminent the mercy which would not permit the soul to perish in it. God be blessed for ever for keeping us from the curse. Jehovah be praised for checking the fury of the foe, and saving his own. The verse reads like a merely negative blessing, but no boon can be more positively precious. He has given us to his Son Jesus, and he will never give us to our enemies.

7. "*Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers.*" Our soul is like a bird for many reasons; but in this case the point of likeness is weakness, folly, and the ease with which it is enticed into the snare. Fowlers have many methods of taking small birds, and Satan has many methods of entrapping souls. Some are decoyed by evil companions, others are enticed by the love of dainties; hunger drives many into the trap, and fright impels numbers to fly into the net. Fowlers know their birds, and how to take them; but the birds see not the snare so as to avoid it, and they cannot break it so as to escape from it. Happy is the bird that hath a deliverer strong, and mighty, and ready in the moment of peril: happier still is the soul over which the Lord watches day and night to pluck its feet out of the net. What joy there is in this song, "our soul is escaped." How the emancipated one sings and soars, and soars and sings again. Blessed be God, many of us can make joyous music with these notes, "our soul is escaped." Escaped from our natural slavery; escaped from the guilt, the degradation, the habit, the dominion of sin; escaped from the vain deceits and fascinations of Satan; escaped from all that can destroy; we do indeed experience delight. What a wonder of grace it is! What a miraculous escape that we who are so easily misled should not have been permitted to die by the dread fowler's hand. The Lord has heard the prayer which he taught us to pray, and he hath delivered us from evil. "*The snare is broken, and we are escaped.*" The song is worth repeating; it is well to dwell upon so great a mercy. The snare may be false doctrine, pride, lust, or a temptation to indulge in policy, or to despair, or to presume; what a high favour it is to have it broken before our eyes, so that it has no more power over us. We see not the mercy while we are in the snare; perhaps we are so foolish as to deplore the breaking of the Satanic charm; the gratitude comes when the escape is seen, and when we perceive what we have escaped from, and by what hand we have been set free. Then our Lord has a song from our mouths and hearts as we make heaven and earth ring with the notes, "the snare is broken, and we are escaped." We have been tempted, but not taken; cast down, but not destroyed; perplexed, but not in despair; in deaths oft, but still alive: blessed be Jehovah!

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This song might well have suited our whole nation at the time of the Spanish Armada, the church in the days of the Jesuits, and each believer among us in seasons of strong personal temptation.

8 Our help *is* in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

8. "*Our help,*" our hope for the future, our ground of confidence in all trials present and to come. "*Is in the name of the Lord.*" Jehovah's revealed character is our foundation of confidence, his person is our sure fountain of strength. "*Who made heaven and earth.*" Our Creator is our preserver. He is immensely great in his creating work; he has not fashioned a few little things alone, but all heaven and the whole round earth are the works of his hands. When we worship the Creator let us increase our trust in our Comforter. Did he create all that we see, and can he not preserve us from evils which we cannot see Blessed be his name, he that has fashioned us will watch over us; yea, he has done so, and rendered us help in the moment of jeopardy. He is our help and our shield, even he alone. He will to the end break every snare. He made heaven for us, and he will keep us for heaven; he made the earth, and he will succour us upon it until the hour cometh for our departure. Every work of his hand preaches to us the duty and the delight of reposing upon him only. All nature cries, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength." "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The following versification of the sense rather than the words of this psalm is presented to the reader with much diffidence :—

Had not the Lord, my soul may cry,
Had not the Lord been on my side;
Had he not brought deliverance nigh,
Then must my helpless soul have died.

Had not the Lord been on my side,
My soul had been by Satan slain;
And Tophet, opening large and wide,
Would not have gaped for me in vain.

Lo, floods of wrath, and floods of hell,
In fierce impetuous torrents roll;
Had not the Lord defended well,
The waters had o'erwhelm'd my soul.

As when the fowler's snare is broke,
The bird escapes on cheerful wings;
My soul, set free from Satan's yoke,
With joy bursts forth, and mounts, and sings.

She sings the Lord her Saviour's praise;
Sings forth his praise with joy and mirth;
To him her song in heaven she'll raise,
To him that made both heaven and earth.

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## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

*Title.*—The title informs us that this sacred march was composed by king David; and we learn very clearly from the subject, that the progression referred to was the triumphant return of the king and his loyal army to Jerusalem, upon the overthrow of the dangerous rebellion to which the great mass of the people had been excited by Absalom and his powerful band of confederates.—*John Mason Good.*

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*Whole Psalm.*—This psalm is ascribed to David. No reference is made to any specific danger and deliverance. There is a delightful universality in the language, which suits it admirably for an anthem of the redeemed, in every age and in every clime. The people of God still live in a hostile territory. Traitors are in the camp, and there are numerous foes without. And the church would soon be exterminated, if the malice and might of her adversaries were not restrained and defeated by a higher power. Hence this ode of praise has never become obsolete. How frequently have its strains of adoring gratitude floated on the breeze! What land is there, in which its outbursting gladness has not been heard! It has been sung upon the banks of the Jordan and the Nile, the Euphrates and the Tigris. It has been sung upon the banks of the Tiber and the Rhine, the Thames and the Forth. It has been sung upon the banks of the Ganges and the Indus, the Mississippi and the Irawady. And we anticipate a period when the church, surmounting all her difficulties, and victory waving over her banners, shall sing this psalm of praise in every island and continent of our globe. The year of God's redeemed must come. The salvation of Christ shall extend to the utmost extremities of earth. And when this final emancipation takes place, the nations will shout for joy, and praise their Deliverer in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.—*N. McMichael.*

*Whole Psalm.*—In the year 1582, this psalm was sung on a remarkable occasion in Edinburgh. An imprisoned minister, John Durie, had been set free, and was met and welcomed on entering the town by two hundred of his friends. The number increased till he found himself in the midst of a company of two thousand, who began to sing as they moved up the long High Street, "*Now Israel may say,*" etc. They sang in four parts with deep solemnity, all joining in the well-known tune and psalm. They were much moved themselves, and so were all who heard; and one of the chief persecutors is said to have been more alarmed at this sight and song than at anything he had seen in Scotland.—*Andrew A. Bonar, in "Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms,"* 1859.

*Verse* 1.—"*The* LORD . . . *on our side.*" Jehovah is on the side of his people in a spiritual sense, or otherwise it would be bad for them. God the Father is on their side; his love and relation to them engage him to be so; hence all those good things that are provided for them and bestowed on them; nor will he suffer any to do them hurt, they being as dear to him as the apple of his eye; hence he grants them his gracious presence, supports them under all their trials and exercises, supplies all their wants, and keeps them by his power, and preserves them from all their enemies; so that they have nothing to fear from any quarter. Christ is on their side; he is the Surety for them, the Saviour of them; has taken their part against all their spiritual enemies, sin, Satan, the world, and death; has engaged with them and conquered them; he is the Captain of their salvation, their King at the head of them, that protects and defends them here, and is their friend in the court of heaven; their Advocate and interceding High-priest there, who pleads their cause against Satan, and obtains every blessing for them. The Spirit of Jehovah is on their side, to carry on his work in them; to assist them in their prayers and supplications; to secure them from Satan's temptations; to set up a standard for them when the enemy comes in like a flood upon them; and to comfort them in all their castings down; and to work them up for, and bring them safe to heaven: but were this not the case, what would become of them!—*John Gill.*

*Verse* 1.—"*Israel.*" The "*Israel*" spoken of in this psalm may be Israel in the house of Laban, in whose person the Midrash Tehillim imagines the psalm to be said. There are certainly some of its phrases which acquire an appropriate meaning from being interpreted in this connection.—*H. T. Armfield.*

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*Verses* 1—4.—Such abrupt and unfinished expressions in the beginning of the psalm indicate the great joy and exultation that will not suffer the speaker to finish his sentences.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

*Verses* 1—2.—The somewhat paraphrastic rendering of these verses (with the unnecessary interpolation of the words in italics in the Authorised Version) greatly weaken their force and obscure their meaning. There is far more meant and expressed than simply that God gave the Israelites the victory over their enemies. The psalm is typico-prophetic. It sets forth the condition of the church in this world, surrounded by enemies, implacable in their hatred, maddened by rage, and bent on her destruction. It gives assurance of her preservation, and continuous triumph, because Jehovah is her God. It foretells the future, full, and final destruction of all her enemies. It re-echoes the song sung on the shores of the Red Sea. In it are heard the notes of the New Song before the great white throne. The praise and thanksgiving are to יְהוָה, the revealed אֱלֹהִים, whose "*eternal power and Godhead are understood by the things that are made:*"—to יְהוָה, the revealed אֵל שַׁדַּי, whom the fathers knew as the Almighty, from the great things which he did for them:—to יְהוָה, the God who has made a covenant with his people, the Redeemer. It is יִשְׂרָאֵל, the chosen people of God, the holy nation, the peculiar treasure to him above all peoples, and thus become, as the Rabbins say, "*Odium generis humani,*" against whom אָדָם (not *men*, but *man* collectively) rose up and sought to destroy. It is יִשְׂרָאֵל, God's chosen, the people of the covenant, that with the "full delight of a personal 'my,'" joy in God and sings, "*But that Jehovah was* לָנוּ, ours!" Tame and frigid is the rendering—"*was on our side.*" Jehovah was theirs; *that*, their safety: *that*, their blessedness: *that*, their joy.—*Edward Thomas Gibson*, 1818—1880.

*Verses* 1, 2.—1. God was on our side; he took our part, espoused our cause, and appeared for us. He was our helper, and a very present help, a help on our side, nigh at hand. He was with us; not only for us, but among us, and commander-in-chief of our forces. 2. That God was Jehovah; there the emphasis lies. If it had not been Jehovah himself, a God of infinite power and perfection, that had undertaken our deliverance, our enemies would have overpowered us. Happy the people therefore whose God is Jehovah, a God all-sufficient. Let Israel say this to his honour, and resolve never to forsake him.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verses* 1, 2, 8.—These three things will I bear on my heart, O Lord: "The Lord *was* on our side," this for the *past:* "The snare is broken," for the *present;* "Our help is in the name of the Lord," this for the *future.* I will not and I cannot be fainthearted, whether in my contest with Satan, in my intercourse with the world, or in the upheavings of my wicked heart, so long as I hold this "threefold cord" in my hand, or rather, am held by it. —*Alfred Edersheim.*

*Verse* 2.—"*If it had not been the* LORD," etc. This repetition is not in vain. For whilst we are in danger, our fear is without measure; but when it is once past, we imagine it to have been less than it was indeed. And this is the delusion of Satan, to diminish and obscure the grace of God. David therefore with this repetition stirreth up the people to more thankfulness unto God for his gracious deliverance, and amplifieth the dangers which they had passed. Whereby we are taught how to think of our troubles and afflictions past, lest the sense and feeling of God's grace vanish out of our minds.—*Martin Luther.*

*Verse* 2.—"*Men rose up against us.*" It may seem strange that these wicked and wretched enemies, monsters rather than men, should be thus moderately spoken of, and have no other name than this of *men* given them, which of all others they least deserved, as having in them nothing of man

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but outward show and shape, being rather beasts, yea, devils in the form and fashion of men, than right men. But hereby the church would show that she did leave the further censuring of them unto God their righteous Judge; and would also further amplify their wickedness, who being men, did yet in their desires and dispositions bewray a more than beastly immanity and inhumanity. — *Daniel Dyke* (— 1614?) *in* "*Comfortable Sermons upon the cxxiiii. Psalme,*" 1617.

*Verse* 3.—"*Then they had swallowed us up quick.*" The metaphor may be taken from famished wild beasts attacking and devouring men (comp. v. 5); or the reference may be to the case of a man shut up alive in a sepulchre (Prov. i. 12) and left there to perish, or (Numb. xvi. 30) swallowed up by an earthquake.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

*Verse* 3.—"*Then they had swallowed us up.*" The word implieth eating with insatiable appetite; every man that eateth must also swallow; but a glutton is rather a swallower than an eater. He throws his meat whole down his throat, and eats (as we may say) without chewing. The rod of Moses, turned into a serpent, "swallowed up" the rods of the Egyptian sorcerers. The word is often applied to express oppression (Psal. xxxv. 25): "Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up": that is, we have made clear riddance of him; he is now a gone man for ever. The ravenous rage of the adversary is described in this language.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse* 3. — "*Quick.*" Not an adverb, "*quickly,*" but an adjective, *alive.* As greedy monsters, both of the land and of the deep, sometimes swallow their food before the life is out of it, so would the enemies of the Church have destroyed her as in a moment, but for divine interposition.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse* 3. — Objection. But what may the reason thereof be? May a man say, that thus the godly shall always prevail and be never overthrown by their enemies, but overcome them rather? Experience doth teach us that they are fewer in number than the wicked are, that they are weaker for power and strength, that they are more simple for wit and policy, and that they are more careless for diligence and watchfulness than their adversaries be: how, then, comes it to pass that they have the upper hand?

Answer. The Prophet Esay doth declare it unto us in the 8th chapter of his prophecy, and the 10th verse thereof, it is in few words "because the Lord is with them and for them."

For, first, he is stronger than all, being able to resist all power that is devised against him and his, and to do whatsoever he will both in heaven and earth.

2. He is wiser than all, knowing how to prevent them in all their ways, and also how to bring matters to pass for the good of his people.

3. He is diligenter than all, to stand, as it were, upon the watch, and to take his advantage when it is offered him, for "He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep."

4. Lastly, he is happier than all to have good success in all his enterprizes, for he doth prosper still in all things which he doth take in hand and none can resist a thought of his; yea, the very "word which goeth out of his mouth doth accomplish that which he wills, and prosper in the thing whereunto he doth send it." In war, all these four things are respected in a captain that will still overcome: first, that he be strong; secondly, that he be wise; thirdly, that he be diligent; and, lastly, that he be fortunate; for the victory goeth not always with the strong, nor always with the wise, nor always with the diligent, nor always with the fortunate; but sometimes with the one of them, and sometimes with the other: but look, where all four do concur together there is always the victory, and therefore seeing all of them are in God, it is no marvel though those whose battles he doth fight, do always overcome and get the victory.—*Thomas Stint,* 1621.

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*Verses* 4, 5.—A familiar, but exceedingly apt and most significant figure. Horrible is the sight of a raging conflagration; but far more destructive is a river overflowing its banks and rushing violently on: for it is not possible to restrain it by any strength or power. As, then, he says, a river is carried along with great impetuosity, and carries away and destroys whatever it meets with in its course; thus also is the rage of the enemies of the church, not to be withstood by human strength. Hence, we should learn to avail ourselves of the protection and help of God. For what else is the church but a little boat fastened to the bank, which is carried away by the force of the waters? or a shrub growing on the bank, which without effort the flood roots up? Such was the people of Israel in the days of David compared with the surrounding nations. Such in the present day is the church compared with her enemies. Such is each one of us compared with the power of the malignant spirit. We are as a little shrub, of recent growth and having no firm hold: but he is like the Elbe, overflowing, and with great force overthrowing all things far and wide. We are like a withered leaf, lightly holding to the tree; he is like the north wind, with great force rooting up and throwing down the trees. How, then, can we withstand or defend ourselves by our own power?—*Martin Luther.*

*Verses* 4, 5.—First the "*waters*"; then "*the stream*" or *torrent;* then "*the proud waters,*" lifting up their heads on high. First the waters overwhelm us; then the torrent goes over our soul; and then the proud waters go over our soul. What power can resist the rapid floods of waters, when they overspread their boundaries, and rush over a country? Onward they sweep with resistless force, and men and cattle, and crops and houses, are destroyed. Let the impetuous waters break loose, and, in a few minutes, the scene of life, and industry, and happiness, is made a scene of desolation and woe. Perhaps there is an allusion here to the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. The floods fell upon them, the depths covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Had God not stretched forth his hand to rescue the Israelites, their enemies would have overwhelmed them. Happy they who, in seasons of danger, have Jehovah for a hiding-place.—*N. McMichael.*

*Verse* 5.—"*Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.*" The same again, to note the greatness both of the danger and of the deliverance. And it may teach us not lightly to pass over God's great blessings, but to make the most of them.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse* 5.—

"When winds and seas do rage,
And threaten to undo me,
Thou dost their wrath assuage,
If I but call unto thee.

A mighty storm last night
Did seek my soul to swallow;
But by the peep of light
A gentle calm did follow.

What need I then despair
Though ills stand round about me;
Since mischiefs neither dare
To bark or bite without thee?"

*Robert Herrick*, 1591—1674.

*Verses* 6, 7.—Two figures are again employed, in order to show how imminent was the destruction, had there been no divine interposition. The first is that of a savage beast which was formerly used. But an addition is made, to describe the urgency of the danger. The wild beast was not only lying in wait for them; he was not merely ready to spring upon his prey;

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he had already leaped upon it: he had actually seized it: it was even now between his teeth. What a graphic description! A moment's delay, and all help would have been in vain. But Jehovah appears on the ground. He goes up to the ferocious beast, and takes out the trembling prey from between his bloody jaws. The danger is imminent; but nothing is too hard for the Lord. "My soul is among lions." "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee." "He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up." The second figure is that of a fowler. The fowler has prepared his snare in a skilful manner. The bird enters it, unconscious of danger: the net is thrown over it; and in an instant its liberty is lost. There it lies, the poor bird, its little heart throbbing wildly, and its little wings beating vainly against the net. It is completely at the mercy of the fowler, and escape is impossible. But again the Lord appears, and his presence is safety. He goes up to the net, lifts it from the ground; the bird flies out, lights on a neighbouring tree, and sings among the branches. "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler." God rescues his people from the craft and subtlety of their enemies, as he does from their open violence.—*N. McMichael.*

*Verses* 6, 7.—We were delivered, 1. Like a *lamb* out of the very jaws of a beast of prey: God "*hath not given us as a prey to their teeth*"; intimating that they had no power against God's people, but what was given them from above. They could not be a prey to their teeth unless God gave them up, and therefore they were rescued, because God would not suffer them to be ruined. 2. Like "*a bird*," a *little* bird, the word signifies a sparrow, "*out of the snare of the fowler.*" The enemies are very subtle and spiteful, they lay snares for God's people, to bring them into sin and trouble, and to hold them there. Sometimes they seem to have prevailed so far as to gain their point, the children of God are taken in the snare, and are as unable to help themselves out as any weak and silly bird is; and then is God's time to appear for their relief; when all other friends fail, then God breaks the snare, and turns the counsel of the enemies into foolishness: "*The snare is broken, and* so *we are delivered.*"—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 7.—"*Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers,*" etc. Various snares are placed for birds, by traps, bird-lime, guns, etc.: who can enumerate all the dangers of the godly, threatening them from Satan, and from the world? Psalm xci. 3: Hosea v. 1.—"*We are delivered,*" not by our own skill or cunning, but by the grace and power of God only: so that every device is made vain, and freedom is preserved.—*Martin Geier.*

*Verse* 7.—"*Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers,*" etc. I am quite sure that there is not a day of our lives in which Satan does not lay some snare for our souls, the more perilous because unseen; and if seen, because perhaps unheeded and despised. And of this, too, I am equally sure, that if any one brings home with him at night a conscience void of offence towards God and man, it is in no might nor strength of his own, and that if the Lord had not been his guide and preserver he would have been given over, nay, he would have given himself over, as a prey to the devourer's teeth. I believe there are few even of God's saints who have not had occasion, in some season of sore temptation, when Satan has let loose all his malice and might, and poured in suggestion upon suggestion and trial upon trial, as he did on Job, and they have been ready to faint, if not to fall by the way—then, perhaps, in a moment when they looked not for it, Satan has departed, foiled and discomfited, and with his prey snatched out of his hands, and they, too, have had gratefully to own, "*Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped.*" Yes! depend upon it, our best and only hope, "*is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*"—*Barton Bouchier.*

*Verse* 7.—"*Our soul is escaped as a bird.*" The snare of the fowler was

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the lime-twigs of this world; our soul was caught in them by the feathers, our affections: now, indeed, we are escaped; but the Lord delivered us.—*Thomas Adams.*

*Verse* 7.—"*As a bird out of the snare of the fowlers.*" The soul is surrounded by many dangers. 1. *It is ensnared by worldliness.* One of the most gigantic dangers against which God's people have specially to guard—an enemy to all spirituality of thought and feeling. 2. *It is ensnared by selfishness*—a foe to all simple-hearted charity, to all expansive generosity and Christian philanthropy. 3. *It is ensnared by unbelief*—the enemy of prayer, of ingenuous confidence, of all personal Christian effort. These are not imaginary dangers. We meet them in everyday life. They threaten us at every point, and often have we to lament over the havoc they make in our hearts. —*George Barlow, in a "Homiletic Commentary on the Book of Psalms,"* 1879.

*Verse* 7.—"*The snare is broken.*" It is as easy for God to deliver his people out of their enemies' hands, even when they have the godly in their power, as to break a net made of thread or yarn, wherewith birds are taken.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 7.—"*The snare is broken, and we are escaped.*" Our life lieth open always to the snares of Satan, and we as silly birds are like at every moment to be carried away, notwithstanding the Lord maketh a way for us to escape; yea, when Satan seemeth to be most sure of us, by the mighty power of God the snares are broken and we are delivered. Experience we have hereof in those who are inwardly afflicted and with heaviness of spirit grievously oppressed, that when they seem to be in utter despair, and ready now, as you would say, to perish, yet even at the last pinch, and in the uttermost extremity cometh the sweet comfort of God's Holy Spirit and raiseth them up again. When we are most ready to perish, then is God most ready to help. "Except the Lord had holpen me," saith David, "my soul had almost dwelt in silence." And this again do we mark for the comfort of the weak conscience. It is Satan's subtlety whereby commonly he disquiets many, that because carnal corruption is in them he would therefore bear them in hand that they are none of Christ's. In this he plays the deceiver; he tries us by the wrong rule of perfect sanctification; this is the square that ought to be laid to Christ's members triumphant in heaven, and not to those who are militant on earth. Sin remaining in me will not prove that therefore I am not in Christ, otherwise Christ should have no members upon earth; but grace working that new disposition which nature could never effect proves undoubtedly that we are in Christ Jesus.—*Thomas Stint.*

*Verse* 8.—"*Our help is in the name of the* LORD, *who made heaven and earth.*" He hath made *the earth* where the snare lies, so that he can rightfully destroy the snare as laid unlawfully in his domain; he hath made the *heaven*, the true sphere of the soaring wings of those souls which he has delivered, so that they may fly upwards from their late prison, rejoicing. He came down to earth himself, the Lord Jesus in whose name is our help, that he might break the snare; he returned to heaven, that we might fly "as the doves to their windows" (Isai. lx. 8), following where he showed the way.—*Richard Rolle, of Hampole* (1340), *in "Neale and Littledale."*

*Verse* 8.—"*Our help is in the name of the* LORD." The fairest fruits of our by-past experience is to glorify God by confidence in him for time to come, as here.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse* 8.—"*The Lord who made heaven and earth.*" As if the Psalmist had said, As long as I see heaven and earth I will never distrust. I hope in that God which made all these things out of nothing; and therefore as long as I see those two great standing monuments of his power before me, heaven and earth, I will never be discouraged. So the apostle: 1 Peter iv. 19, "Commit the keeping of your souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." O Christian! remember when you trust God you trust an almighty

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Creator, who is able to help, let your case be never so desperate. God could create when he had nothing to work *upon*, which made one wonder; and he could create when he had nothing to work *with*, which is another wonder. What is become of the tools wherewith he made the world? Where is the trowel wherewith he arched the heaven? and the spade wherewith he digged the sea? What had God to work upon, or work withal when he made the world? He made it out of nothing. Now you commit your souls to the same faithful Creator.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse* 8.—The Romans in a great distress were put so hard to it, that they were fain to take the weapons out of the temples of their gods to fight with them; and so they overcame. And this ought to be the course of every good Christian, in times of public distress, to fly to the weapons of the church, prayers and tears. The Spartans' walls were their spears, the Christian's walls are his prayers. His help standeth in the name of the Lord who hath made both heaven and earth.—*Edmund Calamy.*

*Verse* 8.—The French Protestants always begin their public worship with the last verse of this psalm, and there is no thought more encouraging and comfortable.—*Job Orton*, 1717—1788.

*Verse* 8.—"*Our help is in the name of the* LORD," etc. These are the words of a triumphing and victorious faith, "*Our help standeth in the name of the Lord, which made heaven and earth*": as if he said, the Maker of heaven and earth is my God, and my helper. Ye see whither he flieth in his great distress. He despaireth not, but crieth unto the Lord, as one yet hoping assuredly to find relief and comfort. Rest thou also in this hope, and do as he did. David was not tempted to the end he should despair; think not thou, therefore, that thy temptations are sent unto thee that thou shouldest be swallowed up with sorrow and desperation: if thou be brought down to the very gates of hell, believe that the Lord will surely raise thee up again. If so thou be bruised and broken, know it is the Lord that will help thee again. If thy heart be full of sorrow and heaviness, look for comfort from him, who said, that a troubled spirit is a sacrifice unto him: (Ps. li. 17.) Thus he setteth the eternal God, the Maker of heaven and earth, against all troubles and dangers, against the floods and overflowings of all temptations, and swalloweth up, as it were with one breath all the raging furies of the whole world, and of hell itself, even as a little drop of water is swallowed up by a mighty flaming fire: and what is the world with all its force and power, in respect of him that made heaven and earth!—*Thomas Stint.*

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## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

*Verse* 1.—"*The* LORD *who was on our side.*" Who is he? Why on our side? How does he prove it? What are we bound to do?

*Verses* 1—3.—Regard the text, I. From the life of Jacob or Israel. II. From the history of the nation. III. From the annals of the church. IV. From our personal biography.

*Verses* 1—5.—I. What might have been. II. Why it has not been.

*Verses* 1—5.—I. What the people of God would have been if the Lord had not been on their side. 1. What if left to their enemies? verses 2, 3. Israel left to Pharaoh and his host in the time of Moses: left to the Caananites in the time of Joshua: to the Midianites in the time of Gideon: Judah to the Assyrians in the time of Hezekiah: "Then they had swallowed us up," etc. 2. What if left to themselves? "The stream had gone over our soul": verses 4, 5. II. What the people of God are with the Lord on their side. 1. All the designs of their enemies against them are frustrated.

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2. Their inward sorrow is turned into joy. 3. Both their inward and their outward troubles work together for their good.—*G. R.*

*Verses* 2, 3.—I. To swallow us alive—the desire of our wrathful enemies. II. To save us alive—the work of our faithful God.

*Verses* 4, 5.—Perils of waters: a number of thoughts may be worked out from the likeness between afflictions and torrents.

*Verse* 6.—I. The Lamb. II. The Lion. III. The Lord.

*Verse* 6.—I. They would gladly devour us. II. They cannot devour unless the Lord will. III. God is to be praised since he does not permit them to injure us.

*Verse* 6.—I. The ill-will of men against the righteous. 1. For their spoliation. 2. For their destruction: "As a prey to their teeth." II. The good-will of God. "Blessed be the Lord," etc. 1. What it supposes—that good men, in a measure and for a time, may be given into the hands of the wicked. 2. What it affirms—that they are not given entirely into their hands.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 7.—I. The soul ensnared. 1. By whom? Wicked men are fowlers. By Satan.

> "Satan, the fowler, who betrays
> Unguarded souls a thousand ways."

2. How? By temptations—to pride, worldliness, drunkenness, error, or lust, according to the tastes and habits of the individual. II. The soul escaped: "Our soul is escaped," etc. "The snare is broken," not by ourselves, but by the hand of God.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 7.—A bird. II. A snare. III. A capture. IV. An escape.

*Verse* 8.—Our Creator, our Helper. Special comfort to be drawn from creation in this matter.

*Verse* 8.—I. The Helper: "The LORD, who made heaven and earth," who in his works has given ample proofs of what he can do. II. The helped. "Our help" is, 1. Promise in his name. 2. Sought in his name: these make it ours.—*G. R.*

*Verse* 8.—1. We have help. As troubled sinners, as dull scholars, as trembling professors, as inexperienced travellers, as feeble workers. II. We have help in God's name. In his perfections—"They shall put my name upon the children of Israel." In his Gospel—"A chosen vessel to bear my name." In his authority—"In the name of Jesus Christ rise up," etc. III. Therefore we exert ourselves.—*W. J.*

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